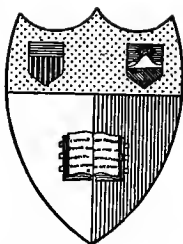


The Book of Self

by
James O'Brien



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THE BOOK OF SELF



ASPHALT

By Orrick Johns

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THE BOOK OF SELF

By James Oppenheim

THE COLLECTED POEMS

of William H. Davies

OTHERS (1916)

*An Anthology of the New
Verse*

THE BOOK OF SELF

By JAMES OPPENHEIM



New York ALFRED A. KNOPF Mcmxvii

p

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE BOOK OF SELF

THE Twentieth Century may be known later as a great religious epoch. The Nineteenth Century is now seen as a period of gestation, stormy with a passionate unbelief and tragic with its gropings. The creeds of the world, riding the previous eras on diverse currents, were all shipwrecked on the rocks of Science. They went down before the Machine and the Laboratory.

For suddenly the body of man, hitherto only strong in destruction, became massive with creative power. Man's body is just as large as his tools, for a tool is merely an extension of muscle and bone: a wheel is a swifter foot, a derrick a greater hand. So, as it were, overnight, in the early part of the century, the race found itself with a new gigantic body. It was as if all the Past — a truly great and wise Mother — had given birth to this huge babe. And through this birth the race had to suffer that humiliation and helplessness which is the fate of life new-born.

That the mother continue in the child, the child must first crawl in the dust, must for a while be all

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body, must have its epoch without a soul. Such was the Nineteenth Century: the race crawling in the dust of industrialism, suffering itself to examine again the facts of life, Science humbly piecing together atom with atom: an epoch all body: but a new body. A glance at Pittsburgh, at the New York skyline, at a mammoth ocean ship, reveals the outline of new man. . . .

The growth of Old Man was a growth through intuition and accidental experience: Wisdom came subjectively and was clouded with dream and myth: the genius of the race was greater in what it was, than in its knowledge. But the growth of New Man is also a growth through conscious vision and experimental experience: it is a growth through Science. The flashlight of intuition is supplemented by the searchlight of intellect. And so Science which began humbly with the chemical facts now turns again to the ancient task, takes up the burden again, resumes the labour of Old Man, by turning its steady and probing light on the psyche, the vast subjective realm.

From the outside it finds what was once found from the inside. It does not destroy the old intuitions, but fulfils them beyond their own power: and by analysing and breaking up the supernatural it raises the natural into new meanings. By lowering heaven it raises earth: and so the eyes of man, already taken from

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Beyond-Earth by the humble tasks of a century of materialism, sees now in Earth all and more than the ancients saw in the thin air of the supernal. Man was never wrong in the revelations of intuition: the error came in his interpretations, which were subjective wholly, the wishes of his heart. By correcting these, Science lifts up man himself to a new place in the world.

Psychology is the name of that science which has the inner life for its kingdom: and it is through analytic psychology that the surface of the modern is again connected with the ancient roots.

This little book owes its best to that science, especially as it is developed by Dr. Carl Jung in Zürich and Dr. Beatrice M. Hinkle in New York. To the latter is due even a certain sort of phrasing. Nevertheless the responsibility for the book is wholly mine, and none of its shortcomings may be laid against any one but myself.

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SELF

WHILE still young,
And after years of striving for goodness,
I found myself a lie.

The self I had built up for the world
Did not wear well . . .
And another self, a self I hated to think of,
Would come slashing through the mask with the blade
of a rapier
Or tongue of smoky flame . . .
Yet, even so, there was relief in these bursts:
I was less smothered inside.

Then finally the artificial self
Broke down . . .
And I feared I was settling back to be a mere animal,
A gorger on food, and the beer-joys, and flesh . . .

But a man is more than a beast, yes, by millions of
years of struggle,
And when he acts the animal
He becomes merely a poisoned man,
A horror:

SELF

And all the human in him revolts, and battles . . .
And he is torn between two antagonists.

So longing for greatness,
I sought Wisdom . . .

Wisdom bid me confess the worst in myself:
To speak honestly of every motive,
To make the hidden apparent,
To call from the deeps of Self the secret demons,
For, said Wisdom,
Ignoring what you are led to a height of lies,
And then to a depth of horror:
But he who accepts himself,
Even piece by piece, probing into every darkness,
Thus comes to the bottom of rocks on which he may
 build.

On such foundations of flesh greatness is raised . . .

So boldly, and in the hurt of seeing my own self,
And letting the worst be dragged from secrecy,
I told, and I tell all. . . .

It is a picture disturbing to contemplate:
With only one comfort for me . . .
Any other man, or any woman,

SELF

Equally candid about himself,
Would present the very image of my soul.

He who bares self, bares humanity.

I

SELF'S the monster all-mouth,
And all gorilla-arms . . .

Give it to me, *me* . . .
I, *I* want it . . .

What cries from the dust so,
What toad-atom puffs itself up to bursting?

It happens to be I:

I, an amiable, smiling, modest-mannered man . . .
I am so impatient after power and fame I'd like to
squeeze Earth in my hand till it cried out . . .
I want to have my way: override others: be known,
acclaimed . . .
And it's on my tongue's tip to say that I surpass
Shakespeare or Napoleon or Mahomet . . .

So great this egoism and greed
That I speak humbly, rarely mention myself,
And every time a work of mine fails I sink into abysses
of self-contempt.

II

I ASK your honest opinion:
But beware of giving it to me . . .
Self is swift to turn against the assailant.

Truly I will listen calmly, laugh casually,
Tell you you are right . . .
But deeper
I am merely like a raw wound,
Hurt by a breath.

III

GIVE me first place,
And let no other share with me what I desire to
possess . . .

This other is named a great poet,
Or this man is smiled on by the woman I love . . .
I grow black inside,
A black tide,
So to smother the tiger who else would tear with teeth
the favoured one.

IV

DO you hear vexation in my voice?
Yes, you kept me waiting ten minutes . . .
Besides, I was served with stale cream for breakfast.

I am raspy as a saw trying to cut through a knot,
My temper is scratchy.

But you see how sweet I am . . .
That's because I dare not give way to my feeling . . .
It would seem unbalanced.

V

I AM bored insufferably by most people . . .
They gag my mouth: I can't talk to them . . .
Nothing I want to say belongs to them,
And nothing I have to say belongs to me . . .

Inside, I watch them and make caricatures,
Donkey-faces and ass-faces, snake-faces and pig-
faces . . .
And the more superior they seem
The lower I put them . . .
Do I not thus raise up myself?

Yet I endure them . . .
I want to be known for kindness and good nature,
An open, generous, lovable man.

VI

I USE many people as tools,
Or try to . . .

My attitude toward a man changes very quickly from
contempt or negligence to attention

If I happen to find out that he can lend me a hand
To greater power.

There are many ways to buy fame and thrones . . .
Even politeness is a penny that purchases a little lift.

VII

PITY? Yes, I am often soft with pity . . .
It's an easy way of finding a substitute for myself
And crying over him . . .
It seems quite righteous to be sorry for him,
To ease the hurt of self-pity
Without telling myself it is I who gain my own tears.

VIII

I WIN approbation for not compromising . . .
And yet sometimes this means
That I am too indolent to adapt myself to necessity,
And without effort hold to my easiest way.

It is much harder to get the picture painted inside the
limits of the frame
Than to splash it on at the size it happens to come.

IX

ONCE I had a virtue called continence . . .
But I here set it down frankly
That I was afraid of women,
All the tangles that might arise,
The dangers of disease and pregnancy,
The welter of emotion that might overwhelm me,
The interruptions to my work . . .

Base cowardice is the root, stem and even blossom
Of many a flower of virtue,
And many a fruit . . .

But the smell of such flowers has a flavour of decay,
And such fruits are spotted with rot.

X

THE golden mean —
Yes, I have practised the golden mean.

There are many mysteries, miracles too,
I haven't tested, I haven't experienced . . .
Height and abyss are missed . . .
But I went safe.

It was all here for my taking,
And I knew at the start that the great miss little,
But are children of hell and stars,
Made wise through extreme life . . .
But I, I practised the golden mean
And went unscathed . . . and childish . . .

XI

I HAVE proudly gone about
Telling people I am a sceptic . . .

What I hid from them
Was that this scepticism
Was my terrible doubt of myself.

Who has ever built a faith on an inner quicksand,
The shiftiness of his own evasions and lies and clever
misleadings of others,
And that quick dramatising of the trivial by which he
sees himself a god?

And who lacking faith in self
Can have faith in any other self?

If the only part of the world I really taste and feel,
The part that is I,
Is fraudulent, a golden phantasy that turns tarnished
at a breath of fact,
How can I believe in the rest of the world?

XII

ONE I loved deceived me,
And I rose in glorious wrath . . .
A wind of godliness possessed me . . .
I became an avenging deity.

What! deception in love?
After this what harmony could be between us,
And where the encircling trust?

Yet, I was so amazed by my own storm,
That I happened to glance at myself,
And found that for some time I had been deceiving
her . . .
And the sin that I did not want for myself
Because I hated it,
I fastened upon her,
So that loosing my wrath against the sin
I struck her, and saved myself.

XIII

I PREACHED passionately
That the meek shall inherit the earth,
And that of the poor is the kingdom of heaven,
And that the last shall be first,
And that woe shall come to him who harms the least
of these.

For I was of the lowly,
And I was poor,
And I was the last,
And I was of the least of these.

XIV

ONCE I made a political creed out of justice to
the downtrodden,
And swore that I would rather consort with prosti-
tutes and pimps,
With the ignorant and the criminal,
Outcast and the oppressed . . .
Not knowing, of course,
That I was moved, not by a love of Truth and of
Justice,
But by a love of self . . .
For my self was low and belonged among the low,
And I hid the fact
By thinking I was one of the great and high
Overflowing with brotherly love.

XV

RENUNCIATION was a word sweet to my
mouth . . .

So I renounced . . .

I devoted myself to my family,
Stayed home at night, gave up opportunities,
Omitted many joys of art and friendship,
Called on my relatives,
And remained strictly cemented in my rut.

It was hard to believe that this renunciation was self-
indulgence:

That I lacked the fighting strength to overcome in-
dolence

And the wrong demands of others,
And fixed habits,
Enough to break loose, and go out to the new,
And meet the shocks and hurts of the stranger's world,
And the risks and icy uncertainties of adventure.

XVI

THERE is a forbidden self-love
That has been mine,
Rooted in childishness,
And in the impossibility
Of devotion to another,
And the forgetting of selfishness.

It is easier to phantasy
The perfect face of a woman,
And to kiss her lips in dream,
Than to grasp a real woman,
With the struggle, pangs, effort and facts
That keep the greatest love in touch with the dust,
And the dust's sting.

XVII

THE sting of women,
And the agony of beauty that stirs at sight of a
sudden face,
And the deep ache after gleaming bodies —
That which with eyes numbs a man, waking desire —
I know, and I have known.
But known, too, as a darkness,
As a hungry cruelty,
A tyrannical oppression.

Such are the slimiest and darkest monsters
In the hiding of my heart.

But women think me gentle
And call me boy.
He of the heaviest hand
Learns, if he is sharp, the lightest touch.

XVIII

ATOM and Sky contend together.

Sky is silent:

Atom is noisy with words.

Says Atom:

"I am God . . .

I am the thinker, the creator, the lover . . .

The future of the heavens is in my hands."

Atom has spoken:

But Sky remains silent,

And shall remain silent

When many heavens have passed away.

Even so, it is hard to think that I,

So heaven-huge in phantasy,

So god-like in imagination,

Am Atom.

XIX

THEY speak of a hundred million suns,
Many of them juggling half a dozen Earth-
sized planets about themselves.

Worlds are evidently cheap,
And planets cheaper.

Yet in the irretrievable depths of this universe
An Atom that is a Self
Makes within itself a great disturbance
For it is guilty of an appetite huge as the world
And wants itself, and not even any other Atom,
To throne the stars.

Many huge-shouldered stars gazing down at that speck
Would marvel at such insolence,
If they were aware of it,
But evidently they move on unaware.

PART II

I

HERE I am, then;
I have taken off these outer garments of Ethics
and Appearance,
And these undergarments of Self-Illusion,
And now, last, I have torn from my face the great
mask,
The Human.

Now I am down to what I am:
The nakedest animal, the white beast:
The tiny conscious engine of Earth whose dream and
thinking are far beyond what he is . . .

How shall I catch up with what I know?
How reach level with my dream?

II

WISDOM says:
Put not thyself down,
But raise Nature up.

Why scorn the naked animal,
Or spit upon the dusty Earth?

The scientist sits in the laboratory
And for ten years studies a fleck of mud:
Vast futures hang on the meaning of that fleck:
Perhaps the health of millions.

The axis of Creation may be a Galaxy or a worm:
And the body of a man is a swarm of fighting miracles.

There is nothing low:
Be wise! Accept! accept!

III

I CAME down at last to the study of my body,
And I found that there was nothing else to
me . . .

Now I had liked to think of myself as an aristocrat and
a lord,
And the dirty, sweating, fecund flesh my slave . . .

Some day the slave should be sacrificed
And the lord walk on high in a heaven where there
was no eating of breakfasts . . .

For in those days I was the Son of God,
A little lower than the angels.

Must I believe that I was only a little higher than
the apes?

IV

I FOUND this:

The Past, a silent giant who has grown through
ages unthinkable,
A fierce liver, whether merely Earth, flaming, smok-
ing, breeding and windy,
Or beast hunting and mating,
Or man swarming and conquering,
Has put forth a hand for to-day's work;
This hand is I.

I think I choose what I want,
But I only want what my body bids me want,
And my body is merely the push and energy of the
Past.

I? I?

Why, this I is only a servant of the nations and the
continents and the Earth and the Sun,
Creation's nigger.

SELF

Think thus, feel thus, do thus,
So says my owner, speaking in my blood . . .
And thus do I think,
Thus do I feel,
Thus do I do.

V

GO to, then: I will get the best of you, my
body . . .

A slave masters his owner when he accepts and loves
him:

For then what he *must* do, he *pleases* to do:
Isn't this freedom?

Go to, I will turn and embrace you, body,
And be one with you,
And let you out to satisfy your hankerings . . .

Come on, you troop of hungers,
Open your mouths — and not vainly.

I keep open house now, my guests are welcome . . .
I bid you in, ambition and gluttony,
And I accept you, you jealousies, envies, hates,
Lead forth the dance, the naked dance, O phallic god
of the autumn.

I shan't hereafter let the tiger and the bull outdo me
in being what I am.

VI

ALL very well: but what now?
Why this fight?

I am a jungle of wild beasts all tearing each other:
And I myself feel like a beast among men,
And I am set against my fellows . . .

The animals move with the lithe grace of a song that
is seen:
They are simple and organic.

But I am torn into shreds of discord;
What fights my visitors after I invite them in?
What pride and hard thinking refuses to accept them?

When I tried to be a god, Earth struck me down,
And now that I try to be Earth, is it a god that
betrays me?

VII

WISDOM laughs at me:
And Wisdom says in my ear . . .

Neither art thou god nor Earth, O dazed sufferer . . .
Thou, thou art man . . .

Didst thou think thou acceptest thy Past?
Dolt, thou hast left out somewhat near a million
years . . .
Thou skippest lightly back over a dozen epochs
And landest in the jungle . . .

Wisdom, Wisdom, what have I skipped?

And thus answers Wisdom:
Man's struggle for a million years,
By which he *is* Man, and neither beast nor god . . .

Now go, foolish one, and accept thy *human* past.

VIII

NOW I go study my body again,
And I see that it is not only flesh of animal
desires,
But also flesh of human desires.

There is an intellect, that needs using,
And a craving for wisdom,
And a need of art,
And that longing for surpassing oneself, we have
named love.

How shall I have my *whole* body,
And make its many jangling chords into one sure
song?

How shall I make the rude gods, Belly and Phallus,
Do team-work with their intangible fellows of the
soul?

IX

THIS is the story of food:

The animal eats his food as he breathes the air,
But man touches his eating with festival and fellow-
ship.

We sit around the table,
And have many beautiful implements, goblets and
painted plates,
A jar of early roses stands on the snowy cloth:
And now comes the ordered ritual of the dishes.

Woven with the tongue's joy is the joy of speech,
Banter, and trivial news, and high discussion,
And the ease of folk who are busy together,
And so commune together . . .

So food is touched with art,
And so eating is made human.

X

THIS is the story of mating:
One animal mounts the other and the seed is
planted . . .

But the lover, in the intimate still dark,
Caresses the beloved, and joins his lips to hers,
And they make songs of a few words, many times
repeated;
Level after level they rise in flight, caught in each
other's arms,
And not until spirits are aglow and high with har-
monies beyond the day,
Are they one flesh, and more than flesh:
A music of thought and passion . . .

So mating is touched with art:
And so mating is made human.

XI

AH, this is what Wisdom told me:
Lower not thyself,
But raise up Nature.

All very well:
But how shall I raise up jealousy,
And how shall I lift to the heights, lust and ambition
and anger,
And how shall I make of mating, love?

With what art can these crude shapes of Earth be
transfigured?
For I see now they are forces,
They are the winds, storms, hurricanes of my body,
They are the wild strains of the fierce Past,
Living in me, destroying me if I shut them down,
And destroying others, if I let them go.

XII

O I am raging with anger:
I want to blast with destruction this man that
I hate:
My mind's eye sees myself slaying him with a blow
and drinking his blood . . .

Wisdom, Wisdom, if ever I needed you, it is now:
I am as a leaf blown in this storm of temper . . .
It rages: I am helpless before it.

See, I must loose the lightning on *him* lest it burn
me up:
One or the other is doomed . . .
I cannot live with this in me:
He dies if I loose it.

XIII

PAUSE! cries Wisdom, with stern menace . . .
Thou sayest this is a storm, and so it is:
A storm of power . . .

Art thou not Man, the storm-harnesser?
Belongest not thou to the breed that hoops in the steam,
Holds on a leash the sea, and makes lamp-light out
of lightning?
Art thou cunning against all save the storms in thine
own breast?

Turn: harness the great power: set it to work . . .

Now is thy strong creative hour:
Art thou a poet, and wouldst thou have the breath of
fiery life in thy song?
Sit thee down, and turn thine anger into music . . .
This gives thy thoughts rhythm and flame . . .

SELF

Art thou an architect?

Channel off the fury in a vision of arches and spires:

Give the storm vent in steel and stone.

Take thy motive power when it comes to thee . . .

With this *feel* what thou doest.

XIV

FOOL, cries Wisdom, blast neither thine enemy
nor thyself:
But in place of killing, create.

Is it not in this that man is more than Nature,
That he turns destruction into creation?
He builds where Nature blasts.

It is even out of ambition, and greed, and hate, and
envy, and lust,
That Man, denied a rending with his teeth,
And a ruining with his claws,
Just to save himself has reared up civilisations . . .

Harness thy passions:
They are thy strength and thy might:
Be Man, the creator.

XV

MAN, the Creator!
But why be man-the-anything?

Man's a dubious venture:
A split-off Question from the Unquestioning:
He and Nature he knows as "I" and "It."

This sundering: what has he gained by it?
He has edged out on a spring-board over the abyss . . .

I envy the spider:
Her fat belly spins silk for scooping nets, so she may
eat,
And bags for her eggs, so she may procreate:
Her life's a tiny river that runs smooth and without
question
Emptying into eggs:
As a single drop of blood in my wrist throbs one with
my heart
So she with Nature.

SELF

Has she a reason for living?

No: but neither a reason for not-living.

But I, I have a hundred reasons for hating life:

For I hurl questions at its pains, failures, botches and
funerals,

And it gives no answers . . .

Or thus it answers, my echo:

Emptiness!

Nothingness!

XVI

WISDOM laughs,
And Wisdom says to me:

Chaos! thou hast perhaps not wrought all thy jangling
chords into one sure song?

But what if thou wert a clear high music?
What if thou camest to the bliss of the spiral,
Never quite a circle of harmony
But forever opening on further into the new circle?

Spider-bliss is circle-bliss . . .
She turns around one turn from egg to egg.

A circle turns in on itself,
But a spiral has yonder to go.

Where art thou aimed?

XVII

I AIMED? At nothing . . .

I am fragments, and each fragment is a mouth,
And I cram each gaper in turn:
But what does the whole Man care?

To eat when I hunger,
To work in work-hours, and play in play-hours,
And then to sleep . . .
Hour after hour and day after day . . .
Why?

It is as if I had a hundred feet,
Each going its own way . . .
Thus, *I, I* go nowhere.

XVIII

THIS is the story of light:
Earth's pelted across the skies with rays from
the sun
But only when the rays strike against an eye is *light*
born:
The sun shines only in the beholder . . .

Is it so with Self?
Is Self only Self when it touches another Self?
Am I myself only through my neighbours?

How shall I bring the song then out of discords
Save as I focus my fragments against another?

And what is this centring and pouring and aiming of
all that I am
Away from myself to another self?

This, whispers Wisdom, is *love*.

XIX

THEN to turn destruction into creation
Is not enough:
But out of this turmoil a Self must be won:
And he only wins Self who loses it — in another.

Marchers into death for the love of God,
Or the John Brown martyrs for a cause . . .
They were the winners of Self.

But *my* God is stuffed with straw:
And I am shoved out from great causes by the scientists
Who are thwarted and clouded by the hot amateur.

Nor will I give my intellect opiates,
And drugged, let go my heart . . .
What then remains?

XX

FOR Man, says Wisdom, there remains Woman,
And for Woman, Man,
And for both, Children.

Dost thou truly crave a God's task?
Then go, and aim and empty and attach thy Soul to
reality:
Lose Self in the living bodies about thee:
A God's labour . . .

No bliss here of the dream:
Woman is not Mother Mary but a web of fighting
forces like thyself,
And Love is a battle, oftentimes bloody . . .

Dost take the challenge?
Love thou a Woman,
And perchance, through her then, Children.

XXI

THEN, cries Wisdom, hast thou the spiral's
course . . .

Thy face is to the future . . .

And thy many rivers meet in one delta of the sea . . .

Thou livest beyond thyself,

Yonder where thy many rays become one spot of light,

And fused in harmony thy Self lifts up its face . . .

Dost question life?

Love does not question:

Love *lives*:

It answers itself as music answers itself . . .

It brings vision:

It asks self-surpassing in thine own soul,

For thou aimest to be a bestower,

And it asks the emptying of self into thy children and
thy works

Who open up the future

And the gods Beyond Man.

NOW, now at last I see:
For Man has ever craved the greatest task,
Even the God's task . . .

Said Michelangelo: "I would take the mountain and
make a face of it."

And said Wagner: "I would turn Earth into a sun
whose rays are song."

And Mahomet cried: "I have an inside mechanism
for becoming God."

I, too, have wanted to squeeze Creation into a handful,
And out-power Alexander . . .

And behold, here have I been given the greatest task
of all . . .

For I have been given the raw materials of a Self,
And the pliant fingers of a consciousness for shaping
the divine clay,
And my task is to create a Self beyond Nature, yea,
and beyond the Human.

SELF

And I know the Self-Creator is the World-Creator:
He snatches the heaven-sent chemic rays of planets
 and suns,
And powerful currents of Earth,
And the stored past in his own brain and body,
And out of this colliding clashing Chaos
Shapes a music and shapes a light . . .

And in the divine struggle of this chaos-shaping
He visions the future,
He sees he is shaping Man by shaping one Man,
And using this Self as a tool
He shapes life about him, shapes Children,
And now for him there *is* the Future,
And the gods Beyond Man.

We are creating through ourselves a diviner progeny
And a greater Earth,
We are working toward the triumph of Man,
And the humanhood of the People . . .
Not blocks of marble and not rhythms of a poem,
Not towers of granite temples nor Empires of rolling
 wealth,
But divine artists who work in flesh
Creating Selves and Souls.

THE SONG OF LIFE

I

WHEN the youth left his Mother's house
Morning was among the mountains
And Spring,
And even as the hills pressed against their breasts with
arms of forest
The little blue lake before that house,
So the Mother encircled her son.

The Father came, and then went,
And the lad followed the man with a glance of hate.

His Mother gave her son a bright sword:
"Keep this, it is sharp with your Mother's love:
Use it to slay the Dragon."

"There are no Dragons in these days," said the youth.

But the Mother smiled in sorrow:
"There are, there are, my son . . .
And when the dark hour comes
Slay, though it slays you."

II

THEN he said:
“How can I bear to leave you?”

She spoke with passion:

“Where you are, my son, there am I:

And where you go, I follow . . .

And when you are in fear and need, as a child again,

Turn even so much as an inch, and you will find your

Mother,

Her arms warm about you.”

They kissed good-bye: though he doubted her words.

But as he started forth, not daring to look back,

From the Mother sprang the image or ghost of the

Mother,

Like her even to the grey hair about her temples,

And keeping pace with the youth, walked on behind

him,

And followed him to the woods.

III

HE walked straight down the trail, looking back
but once:

He did not see the Mother so close behind him,
But he saw the beloved woman in the doorway,
And stumbled on blind with hot tears.

And he thought:

"I leave her with him:
Would first that he would turn into a dragon
That I might slay him, my hard father,
And remain forever with her."

His stumbling startled partridges:
They drummed wildly up through hemlock twilight
And flashed across a clearing of sun:
He smelt strong pine and good Earth:
He drank the wild mountain-air . . .
The blood of youth mounted and flushed his body . . .

Sudden, the most ancient intoxication was his,
Wildly beating against his longing for home,
And restlessly he plunged ahead.

THE SONG OF LIFE

“Would I stay,” he thought, “would I stay?
Or would I go clamorously against the world,
A conqueror from the hills?”

The Image followed him, quickening her steps to his.

IV

THE road goes down from the mountains to the
smoky valleys of men:

It goes down a great slope along a precipice:
And there beyond stretches the world.

Down the road the youth came swinging radiantly,
A hunter from the hills:
He was good health among the healthy heights,
He came toward the valley like good news.

But he paused precipitately:
For in the western skies hung a vision and a mirage:
Hung as a cloud hangs, a golden city,
With all her towers and domes and climbing roofs:
A vision like gold sunrise,
Like the dazzle when one looks into the sun . . .

His heart failed . . .

"I conquer that?" he asked . . .

"Who am I, that this task is mine?

My place is in the pine-sweet house of my Mother,
And in the simple health of the mountains
And the simple days."

V

BUT as he turned to go back,
That Image turned not:
And he thought he saw his Mother,
She, standing very close to him in the sunlight,
Sad, ah, so sad, with her dark experienced eyes
And the lines about her mouth.

He thrilled as he felt her arms about him,
And remained so in comfort.

But as he looked up, the golden city was gone:
And he girded up his loins,
And went on, the Mother following him.

VI

NOW there dwelt a wood-cutter in the midst of
the lower forest:
He dwelt alone with his daughter.

The youth was wandering through the forest, and
thirsted:

It was near noon . . .

He spied the wood-cutter's cabin, and came to the
door.

The house was empty, sweetened with pine-needle air,
Shafts of dusty forest sunlight, and silence . . .

Silence, save for a creek of the heights

That roared white and icy down the rocky flume . . .

The youth searched about, drawing near to the waters,
And came to some bushes, and peered through:

And he forgot his Mother and himself, adoring the
glory of this world.

VII

FOR the wood-cutter's daughter was bathing in the
stream:

A young girl, dark, with hair like the raven's,
And a slipping white body fresh from the waters and
flashing

As the sun ran down the wet:

Over her head she held a towel with two arms out,
And ecstatic with the cold creek, and with glowing
drunken youth,

She stood tiptoe, as if wings on her feet would toss
her over the pine-tree tops . . .

And lacking wings to lift her, she sang:

Sang spontaneous snatches of a ringing wood-music:

A hymn to Earth and life.

Gone were Golden City and Mother for the lad:

He panted suddenly with the pines and the passionate
Earth:

He was a boy of the sun, armed with the lance of
fruitful fire:

He grew dizzy, and blushed, a flame of desire:

A flame to wrap the girl in.

VIII

WHEN she came up, in a rude garment of green,
Through the hang of which her white legs
glanced and vanished,
And her black hair about her back and shoulders,
And one hand holding the green against her young
breasts,
She spied the youth, who waited trembling in her
father's doorway.

She stopped, as a doe stops, hearing the hunters;
Startled, wide-eyed, with parting lips,
And one knee over the other . . .

Yet even in her fear she thought she saw a shadow
upon him or behind him:
But she did not see it was his Mother.

Then he spoke, stammering, asking her pardon,
And telling of his thirst.

THE SONG OF LIFE

“Wait,” she said, confused, “until I am dressed,”
And slipped by him into the cabin,
And closed the door.

IX

HE heard her singing softly as she clothed herself,
And he knew that he had seen the naked Earth,
For what is body of man but Earth stripped down
to its essence,
Its magical and miraculous core of vision and hands?

And she, she knew she had gazed into the face of the
sun,
For what is the sun but the male of the Earth,
Whose pointed fire impregnates the seed?

But when she called him in, they dared not look at
each other:
He saw the rude table set with milk, and with bread
and honey,
And nuts of the wood.

He sat and ate, and she tended him . . .
And so the wood-cutter found them,
Lad and girl in the shadow of the cabin,

THE SONG OF LIFE

Graceful beyond mated tigers or mated antelopes.
Oh, cup of sparkling wine, which, if they are wise,
The elders put to their soul's lips, and drink:
Youth, that keeps age young.

X

HE abode in that place a fortnight:
He helped the wood-cutter fell great oaks,
Swinging lustily the axe.

All that time his Mother hovered over him,
But her image had grown wan and white and thin,
Like a shadow against a second light.

Sometimes the girl brought them their midday meal,
But for love of each other, they dared not look at
each other.

Then at night, before the roaring logs in the hearth,
They sat: she sang: he told tales out of his youth.

Once the father slept, and as they said good-night,
He dared to kiss her:
Her lips were smooth as a pine-needle,
Or smooth as a curved stem of the Indian-pipe:
And her breath was the full rich breath and sweet

THE SONG OF LIFE

Of meadow kine:

Through the kiss, and the quick touch of her back,
He felt her body as a gliding stem of wonder, so
young, so sweet . . .

But on his couch he laboured and panted:

His joy ran into distress: the light darkened:

He was in a pain that amazed him:

A poison lurked in the wine,

A serpent coiled in the girl's heart.

XI

SPRING was at her height:
The red cardinal was building his nest, and singing:
The stags were battling for the does.

There is in that forest a leafy covert, in shadow, with
soft grass:
Violets peer among the grasses:
And the amorous wind, gone cool and hot,
Is rich with herbage, and the damp rank Earth,
And pungency of pines.

A bed this, for lovers,
In the season when Earth is a bridal bed,
And many songs rise, and a dream wings tree to tree;—
Then in agony is ecstasy, and the wild, the golden
energy
Goes restless through all bodies of life:
And there is desire to create, the longing for children.

THE SONG OF LIFE

On this day, through sun and flying shadow of the
forest,
The young lovers went, nearly running, and with no
words,
Until they found the covert.

There they stretched their fresh young bodies on the
grasses,
And panted secretly . . .

Thought was gone, and speech lost:
They were caught in the inarticulate silence of nature:
Which feels so deep it cannot speak.

XII

INSECTS buzzed in the grasses,
The bees hummed by with cargoes of wood-honey:
Gazing up into the sky, they saw it as an infinite fire
of blue,
Changing the world to glory.

For very pain he turned toward her, raised on his
elbow,
And his hand down her sloping side feasted upon her.

Then she drew near, in pain,
And the moment had come for them . . .

But as he locked her in his arms,
A black snake of horror reared hissing in his heart,
And passion died . . .

For in his arms lay his Mother,
The hair grey over her temples,
And the lines about her mouth,
And sorrow of those much-experienced eyes.

THE SONG OF LIFE

He arose, trembling, and turned from her :
He knew that he was naked.

Flaming swords drove him from that Eden,
And not once looking back, he left her where she
 moaned and wept,
And went forth to find the trail again,
His Mother following.

XIII

HE thought to himself:
“ I will go back to the house where I was born,
Where all is simple and secure:
And I will be a good son, and help my father at his
hunting.”

Yet he tried again to think of the wood-cutter's daughter:

But he gave this up in horror,
For whenever her image floated into his mind
It took the visage of his Mother,
And he shuddered at the passion that he felt:
Shuddered, and put it from him.

So, distraught, he found the trail,
And he thought he saw his Mother in front of him,
Beckoning him home . . .

He followed, slowly . . .

XIV

BUT when he came to the hill of the Vision of
the Golden City,

He paused:

Pilgrims in grey were going in slow processional up
the slope . . .

It was grey twilight, and out of the hidden valley
beyond

The bells were beating solemnly,

And peace was on the planet . . .

Through the grey air the grey procession wan-
dered . . .

Then the leader, a simple religious man,

With beard, and clear untroubled eyes,

Turned to the youth and spoke to him . . .

“Son, you are troubled!”

The lad felt suddenly that he could say all:

This man was a sky of understanding . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

"All is vanity," he said, "and the world is foul:
I am beset with life's perils."

"Then," said the leader, "turn unto God:
Put on a grey robe of forgetfulness
And turn inward from the world . . .
'*He* giveth his beloved, peace . . .'"

Night poured her stars out into the gulf of grey,
And all was still:
He took the robe, and followed.

XV

NOW there was a place in the forest the Druids
might have prayed in,
August with highest pines:
Here the forest turned in on itself
And meditated in thick silence . . .
Here was sanctuary from the world,
And the woods like a mother enfolded whoso came,
And a man knew vastness by being closed vastly from
it.

The pilgrims halted here, and put down their burdens,
And built a fire, and laid out a frugal supper.

In the silence the leader rose, and pointed upward:
Between the dusky treetops glinted the stars.

XVI

AGAINST eyed Night they gazed.
"O you stars," (so he prayed)
"Who shepherds you, each in his path, across the
eternal reaches?
Who holds you up from the abyss?
He shepherds us, each in his path, across the reaches
of Earth;
He holds up us from the abysses beneath us . . .
O Father, that art in heaven,
With open hearts we entreat thy love
And surely thy love is for thy children,
Who are very little, and they know not where they
go, but their souls thirst,
And they crave thy healing waters, O thou God."

Then, in the fire-crackling silence,
Off from the youth's soul slid the load of the world,
And through him went bliss deep and pure:
Tears faltered down his face,
He was at peace.

THE SONG OF LIFE

"I have found God," he thought,
"To-night I shall sleep."

He did not see his Mother's image grown large as the
 night
Inlaid with stars.

XVII

THEY went singing in the morning:
“The pure shall conquer heaven!
Glory! glory! glory!”

“Am I pure?” the youth asked himself . . .

His young body was fresh from the bath,
Sap climbed in him: sunrise laughed:
His soul *danced* . . .

Then he remembered the girl bathing in the flume,
And her outstretched arms, and opening singing mouth.

His grey robe sat like steel on his naked shoulders,
And chains bound his ankles.

“What have I to do with these solemn ones?” he
asked . . .

“Are they swimmers, and runners, and wielders of
the axe?

I am cheated of my youth.”

THE SONG OF LIFE

In dark revolt he walked with the pilgrims along the
climbing trail:

But they went singing in the morning:

“The pure shall conquer heaven!

Glory! glory! glory!”

XVIII

BUT at high noon they came to an ancient temple:
Even their soft footsteps sent echoes among the
marble pillars . . .

Each chamber was a step rising toward the inmost
sanctuary:

And shadow deepened room to room . . .

That temple stood white on an island:
The river splashed among the reeds around it,
The lizard basked on the rocks . . .

In the outer court the white sunlight dazzled,
But in the second court the light was mellow,
And in the third it was golden-grey,
And in the fourth it was like the light of a starry
night.

In the fifth they paused so that the eye might see,
And in the innermost holy of holies they saw not for
a great while,

But were enfolded in the primal dark.

THE SONG OF LIFE

Then, when they saw,
They beheld a kindly image of God, the Father,
Bearded, and wise of eyes, and with hand blessing.

And the leader murmured:
“ This is the Silence of Silences,
And we are in the song of this Silence:
This is the Light in Darkness:
And we are in that Light:
This is the Peace that passeth understanding:
Open, heart, be lifted, soul, give all, give all;
Arise! shine! be glorified!”

XIX

IN the first court the youth felt a cool hand laid on
his throbbing forehead:

In the second his body eased and discord ceased,
In the third a strange music began in his heart,
In the fourth a longing filled him for ineffable mystery:

In the fifth he panted with great thirst,
And as he listened in the inmost shrine
Earth passed away as a smoke in the heavens,
And he stood in the Mystery.

This wonder dwelt with him for seven days:
His eyes gazed inwardly, and he saw and heard not:
He was as one apart . . .

And in this time he heard buried music, the song of
the soul,
As it flowed like a stream in the ocean:
And strange glimpses came of old days,
And he was a child crawling in the garden and considering butterflies,

THE SONG OF LIFE

Or at the window, in his mother's arms, he saw the
full moon and said, "That is God,"
Or he smelt faint honeysuckle and warm milk,
Or he dwelt a pigmy among giants, and one of these
was his father.

Then, many times, he seemed deep in water,
And in many waters:
And this was the sea sounding in his ears:
This was the sea . . .

So he moved like a memory for seven days,
His Mother's image patiently tracing his steps.

XX

ONE night he arose out of sleep, with a shout
pounding at his sealed lips:

And wildly he slipped from the camp, and ascended
a high hill . . .

The trees were swinging in the wind, and the clouds
were driven across the heavens . . .

And up on the hill's height he shouted:

"Alone! I am alone!

Lord! they have dragged me down in the abyss!"

And a dark shape stood up against him . . .

And he drew his sword to slay it . . .

The same sword that his Mother had given him . . .

But in agony he fell down on the damp Earth,
Crushing the grasses, and gnashed his teeth, and
moaned . . .

It was the darkest hour.

THE SONG OF LIFE

Then a wind seemed to lift him, lift him lightly as
a dead leaf is lifted,
And he arose like a wave,
And looked upward, and behold,
The heavens opened in gold before him.

And it seemed as if a face shone in the centre of the
gold,
Even as the sun,
But around it were wider and wider rings of suns,
Even as a widening funnel from heaven to earth,
And these rings of suns circled like angels singing:
And the light was intolerable.

XXI

HE sang: "O flame, O life!
O universe that is fire from end to end,
And one fire opens into another,
And I am a flame singing in the glory . . .

"My revelation has come to me, and truth is upon
me . . .

I shall carry God to the ends of the Earth . . .
Now I shall raise the multitudes with news of heaven."

And he went down to the sleepers,
And they awoke and saw that he was one purified,
And that he was love.

And that morning he spoke the prayer before them,
And he was the first among them to sing in the morn-
ing:

"The pure shall conquer heaven!"

XXII

HE repaired to the temple to make sacrifice:
For he loved God so that he had to give to
him . . .

And he had but one thing to give that was precious
to him,
The sword of his Mother.

"And this will I give," he said, "though the blood
of my heart goes with it."

He came to the image in the inmost shrine,
And he loved the image . . .

He knelt and prayed to it . . .
"Father," he prayed, "thy love enfolds me,
I am a child in thine arms:
Thou art with me day and night,
And where I go, thou followest,
And when I need, thou art there . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

O for a sign, reach down, O Lord,
Reach down and take thy child in thine arms."

And he waited for the miracle.

XXIII

THAT shape of God did reach down;
And the youth felt great arms enfold him,
And was caught to the heart of God . . .

But in his ecstasy he opened his eyes,
And the silence sundered in a great cry:
For he saw God face to face . . .

And over the temples of God was grey hair,
And around the mouth deep lines,
And sadness was in the much-experienced eyes . . .
And God was the beloved woman . . .

He pushed away in a wild fear, keeping his sword,
And fled far from that place.

And he flung off his grey robe and ran naked:
Even as one mad . . .

And though he saw not the image of his Mother
hastening behind him,

THE SONG OF LIFE

And even as his shadow,
He cried out:
“Why do you pursue me forever?
O monster-mother!”

He had forgotten that she was to be with him ever.

XXIV

NOW summer was rich on the land,
And the fledglings were testing their wings for
flight:

The milk came thick with cream, and the flies swarmed
about the lashing tail . . .

It was a time of gardens, and sleep in hot noon,
And mad throbbing nights . . .

Now the spider killed her mate and dined on him,
Now in the jungle the hunters slew,
Now there was war among men . . .

And the youth, in the quick flush of a summer morn-
ing,
Came out upon great waters, smooth in the sun . . .

And he saw canoes heavy with bronzed warriors,
Their paddles dipped, rippled and flashed: the drip
fell:

They were moving toward the shore.

THE SONG OF LIFE

And the promise of heat heated his blood,

And he said:

"I am a hunter from the hills:

I came from my mother's house to battle and conquer . . .

I am still young."

So he waited, exultant, for the coming of the fighters.

XXV

THEIR chief greeted him . . .

“Why does the stripling watch us, as idle as a girl?”

He said: “I would go along with you.”

“Has the boy any fighting gear?” asked the chieftain.

“My warriors have no arms for you.”

And the youth showed his sword, and the chieftain felt of it.

“A true sword,” said the chieftain, “but a sword for a man.”

“I shall grow a man, using it!” cried the youth.

The warriors smiled, but they accepted him . . .

He bore his share of a canoe on his shoulder,
And marched in the hot sun across the naked land . . .

And as his shadow his Mother marched close to him
in the sun.

XXVI

THEIR bivouac was on a hill,
Under the far-off camp-fires of the stars.

And they sang in mighty chorus all together
A hymn before the battle:

“We fight not for ourselves, Lord God of Hosts,
But for the land that bore us: our fatherland:
Whose soil is sacred with our fathers’ ghosts,
And there our dear homes stand.

“Give us the battle, Lord of Sabaoth,
And thou shalt have the last gasp of our breath:
For the land that bore us, we are nothing loath
To go down dark in death.

“A people bow them to thee, Battle-Lord,
Our wives and children send into our blows
A passion that shall make our swords thy sword
And scatter all our foes.”

THE SONG OF LIFE

When the youth heard this,
A glad forgetfulness of self swept him;
He was a man among men:
He was but one of a host:
And the great Cause, the Cause of a Nation and of
a People and of a Land
Caught him like fire and burned him up into the
flames . . .

XXVII

THEY swept like avengers and like destroyers
Into the battle:

And now the latter dream of the Earth,
The dream of gods that love and build,
Passed away from the bodies of men like fumes of
wine,
And left the naked white bodies as they were in the
Age of Stone.

The most terrible of animals were these men:
Their fangs were lengthened into swords,
And their claws into spears:
They were as sure a thrust of the Earth as hurricane
and waterspout:
All was destroyed before them . . .

And as they came on the foe, speech was forgotten,
And all Gods blasted:
The youth tasted the entrails of vision,
With primal thirst for the blood of a man,
And hunter's lust to kill.

THE SONG OF LIFE

Screaming they closed upon each other :
And he who was pierced, felt no wound,
And he whose leg was loosed, crawled on the other,
And the dead fell with cemented clutch on the victor,
And all rolled together in red and whirling ruin.

XXVIII

OUT of this insanity he came
Shaken and old . . .

They built the camp-fires, they gathered about the
flames,
And trembling silence fell.

They were very wearied of the battle:
The longing for sleep was beyond the longing for
life:
They were as dead things moving about.

He fell down, asleep, as a stone falls:
And all was blank and void.

XXIX

BUT in the morning they got them up, and followed the flying foe:

And again each was as an eddy of wind in a cyclone.

And they came to a village of the valley, and they sacked it . . .

They sent up the ancient houses in flames and smoke,

And they slew old women and old men,

And drove the children before them:

And all was insane vision and red madness . . .

And the youth, with foam on his lips, went into a cottage door,

And struck down a feeble cripple with his sword.

He laughed over the writhing shape,

And marked the last agony:

A terrible joy was his.

XXX

THEN an old woman advanced clamouring upon
him,
And he lifted his sword against her,
But his hand dropped.

She had grey hair over the temples,
She had lines about the mouth,
There was anguish in those much-experienced eyes.

And like a guilty black shape he crept away:
And the sun was dark and cold in the summer sky:
And the land was withered and old.

He was a withered thing, and he was old:
Stealing far out to the cool forest,
And beyond the battle.

XXXI

HE climbed to high places to escape himself:
He was sick in body and in mind . . .

And he stopped, and knelt, and washed his sword
clean in a brook,
And looking on the spring-water reddened with a
man, he cried out:
“Life is a horror and a madness:
Into what cranny can I creep, where there is nothing?
I fear death is not death: but more life.”

“Healing? where is it?”

“Shall I go back to my Mother’s house?
Shall I bring her this ruined image of the youth that
went from her?
Shall I repay her in base coin?
Or shall I take this sword and plunge it into my
breast?”

THE SONG OF LIFE

He sank down moaning:

“ Mother, mother! where are you? ”

And those tender arms gathered him in,

And he thought he felt her warm breath on the back
of his neck.

XXXII

NOW Autumn, with wild grapes in her hair,
And plaited red leaves for a bodice,
Danced down the land, laughing in the gale.

The mad dance of death began:
The going out in glory . . .

Now the air tasted of sharp wild things,
And there was a game-flavour in the lusty Earth.

It was the time of dancing, and of wine, and of red
living:
The forests staggered, drunkenly, shouting wine-
songs . . .

And the youth, blown out of sleep by a mighty morn-
ing,
Tasted the pine-strong air of the heights,
In a rain-rinsed brilliance of the sun among wild
cloud-shadows,

THE SONG OF LIFE

And took hold on life, and went with springing steps
up the heights. . . .

And he came to a slope of rock and stunted balsams,
Wild, inaccessible, a primal spot:
And living gusts of the lightning air swept down it
Into the dark loud forest beneath.

XXXIII

AND as he paused, with the mad kiss of the dancing sun on his lips,
In the upper woods he saw a flashing of blue,
And from out of the trees, blowing, she came . . .

Two dogs straining on the leash, she held,
And she was being drawn along in powerful strides,
One strong foot after the other taking the hard ground
obstinately . . .

A garment of filmy blue tossed about her young white
body,
And her eyes were of the same blue, and were liquid
with life,
But her hair, blowing, was golden, and glowed heaped
in the sun . . .

Down the rocks she slipped, tugging:
The strong hounds panted . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

Then they brought up, dancing, barking and gnashing
at the youth . . .

“Down! down!” she cried, in a voice like wind over
water:

And she looked up, beholding the youth.

XXXIV

SHE smiled, glad that he was strong and young,
And one blood with the weather.

But she saw the shadow of the tragic child in his
eyes . . .

“Down!” she cried again, and beat the dogs down
with the thong . . .

“So! They will not hurt you . . .”

He laughed shortly:

“Let me rein them in and follow them!” he said . . .

“Not both of them,” she laughed . . .

“Each, one: I love the tug as of a wind on a sail.”

So he took one of the dogs, and standing very near
her

Saw the health glowing in her and poured like strong
sun through her eyes . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

And his sickness was drawn to this laughing health . . .
He gloried in her . . . they gloried in each other.

So swiftly they slipped and slid and were pulled, each
on the leash,
Into the lower gale-loud woods.

XXXV

OAK shouted to pine, and beech to cedar:
High seas were running above them:
Brush snapped, and wood-folk scurried: the leaves
fell:
Sun spilled wildly, they danced on shadows.

And she talked with him of the wars,
And of his home in the hills, and of his youth:
And she yearned over the agony in his soul.

And she said to him:
"Who can get enough of life,
And who can drink deep enough of this wine?
All that I see, I long to possess, yes, to hug it into
my body
Till it runs in my blood . . .
I would carry Earth if I were large enough."

"Is this a girl? a woman?" he thought,
"Or is this Earth, the Great Mother?"

THE SONG OF LIFE

Then she spoke of her father,
Who was a hunter as his father was a hunter:
But also a hunter after wisdom . . .
She had learnt more than stag or panther in her
father's cabin . . .

And so she spoke freely, openly:
He could have listened till the end of days.

XXXVI

THEY came out on a mighty natural clearing above
a gorge:

Oak and pine were heaven-high:

The grass glistened in the wind:

There stood the hunter's cabin . . .

Her father waited them at the doorway: he greeted
the stranger:

The dogs leaped on him, barking . . .

His used hands stilled them: he pointed upwards . . .

There over the gorge, poised in mid-heaven,

A lonely eagle screamed . . .

Something of the eagle was in father and daughter:

And the youth longed for such victory.

Then they went in, where the savoury venison steamed,

And the golden corn was hot . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

And the father let him stay, because *his* father was a
hunter:

And so he stayed, and hunted all that wild autumn.

XXXVII

STORM was coming: the air was brown
Swirling into opening heaven-gulfs of dirty yellow:
The dust eddied, and lamentation was on the
woods . . .

In the heart brooded the packed forebodings of the
wind . . .
Hot, ominous, smouldering with death . . .

And the youth, and she of the golden hair, also youth,
Stood on a great rock that jutted over the gorge,
And gazed down into the shadowy abyss . . .

Now he wanted to take her body in his arms,
And pierce that strength with his life . . .

He reached for her hand, but she drew back with a
cry of anguish . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

“There is a shadow,” she cried, “and a shape between us . . .”

And he looked, and between him and her,
He saw his Mother standing with vivid eyes.

The heavens burst: the autumnal rains came lashing:
The world was drowned in tempest.

XXXVIII

THEY stirred not, though the drench matted their
hair,
And their two bodies streamed, cold and beaten.

He cried out: "I love you,"
But the words meant nothing.

"No," she said, "it is not I you love! Not I!"

He was numb with despair.

"But you love me?" he faltered.

"Ah," she said, "the heart must love, though it love
but a dream:
But only a man shall win me."

"And I," he said, "am I no man?"

She was silent: he heard the rain on her lowered
head . . .

And he knew himself for what he was.

XXXIX

HE felt that he must die to win her . . .
Or he felt that he must carry her off struggling
in his arms
As a warrior wins a woman . . .
But even in the image of this he saw his Mother. . . .

Then she pointed at his sword, and she said:
“ Whence came this? ”

He blushed: “ My Mother gave it to me when we
parted.”

“ And what said your Mother? ”

“ She said there was a Dragon to slay.”

“ There *is* a Dragon,” said the girl.

“ But,” he murmured, “ there are no Dragons in these
days.”

THE SONG OF LIFE

She too smiled in sorrow:

"There are, there are," she said . . .

"And when the dark hour comes,

You must slay, though it slays yourself."

Suddenly it seemed that a knife twisted in his breast:

He tasted his own blood on his lips:

And for horror, he could have shrieked.

He had to go away from her then, and he almost
ran:

He was gone in the woods.

She loved him so that her anguish equalled his . . .

But she had to let him go to the death-hour.

XL

ALL that night in the storm
He ran down alleys of himself
And dwelt in the early days . . .

And now for the first time he knew his love for his
Mother . . .
For he seemed to be a baby again, crawling on the
floor,
And playing with coloured stones, and picking daisies
apart,
Drunk with the miracles of the world . . .

And he was alone, in the black night, in his cradle,
And he knew he was alone:
And he cried for his Mother . . .

And the darkness and the night enfolded him with
those arms,
And his longing was eased, and his fear fled away in
golden dreams . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

But forever his father was stealing the love of his
Mother,
And he hated his father.

And now that the world was blasted in pine and oak
And life was shattered by yellow-flying death,
He longed to be a child again.

Then was safety, and then comfort,
Then there were arms to shelter him and to soothe
him . . .
Only then was God.

Now he wept for those comforting arms again:
He did not want to taste the loneliness of being a
man.

XLI

SO he was buried in vision, starving for three days
and three nights:

But on the third night, he climbed a hill, where stood
one lonely pine . . .

He sank beneath this, awaiting death . . .

"I would die," he moaned, "I would put away the
burden . . .

O beautiful Mother, dark Death, take me to your
heart!"

But as he lay prone, he became silent,
And opening his eyes, he beheld the stars . . .
And he knew the hour had come.

He arose slowly, and turned:
And there stood his Mother, as in life:
The grey hair about the temples,
The lines about the mouth,
The sorrow of those much-experienced eyes. . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

She looked at him, beseeching:

As though she said: "I have gone to much trouble
for you:

And none shall love you as I love you!"

He drew his sword slowly: his heart beating in his
throat . . .

"Can it be," he said, "that a Dragon can be so beautiful?"

XLII

AND he said:
"How, my darling, can I slay you,
And how can I harm the least hair of your head?"

And again he said:
"I have no comfort but you, and no dream but you."

So the first hour passed . . .

Then he raised his slack hand again, and murmured:
"I am as one in a trance: I cannot do this thing."

But he knew the time had come for him . . .

And now he drew up all the passion of his heart,
A terrible wild passion,
And willed to slay her through clenched teeth:
He willed that she must go down in death:
He willed to put her from him.

THE SONG OF LIFE

But his heart whispered:

“ Hold! hold! this woman is your Mother!”

And so the second hour passed.

XLIII

NOW he knew what death tastes like,
And the wrench and throes of the last hour . . .
He was torn asunder, and gasping . . .

And in vision he saw the stunted balsams and the
rocks,
And the leash-held girl with her firm feet . . .

Wild battle began to rage in him, to do it or not to
do it:

And he went mad, and shut his eyes, and lifted up
his sword,

And would have struck, but through this madness a
wilder madness came,

And what he thought an image was a woman's body,
The hand grasping away the sword, and the warm
body struggling with his.

In horror, he shrieked out, but now he struggled on.

And a voice cried, "My son! spare me!"

THE SONG OF LIFE

“Down, monster-mother!” he shouted, and opened
his eyes,
And stabbed her through the breast.

XLIV

SOBBING, horribly shaken, he caught her falling
body,
And dared not look at it.

“What have I done?” he asked himself, “what have
I done?”

But the body felt strangely light in his arms,
And, curious, he looked, and behold!
There lay, not a woman, but a child in his arms . . .

And curiously he looked closer,
And he thought he knew the dead bleeding child.

And then he saw that the child was himself
Even as he was in the earlier days.

He laid the child on the hillside, and he wept sweet
tears . . .

“I have slain the child in me!” he said . . .

XLV

OPEN went his heart, and out of it flew eagles,
And a music of great victory went all along his
body:

He arose as one unshackled, and he felt himself a
giant.

And he lifted up his arms to the stars, and he cried
loud:

"I have triumphed over self! The child becomes a
man!"

He was light as air is light, and sweeping from the
heavens

Life, which is a flame, uplifted him with wings . . .

"I was sucked away from greatness by a cancer in my
side:

It is cut away, it is clean cut off, and O, the world
to conquer!

Where is the Golden City where I may go and
work?"

THE SONG OF LIFE

Dawn began to blow her trumpets in the East:
And like a wind of dawn he hastened down the hill-
slope . . .
Alone, he was alone, no Mother-Image tracked him,
But all the life in him was free, ready to overflow.

XLVI

“O MY beloved,” so she sang,
“Your death-hour was birth-hour:
You are radiant with the sun-crown of man . . .
My conqueror has come from the hills, my god has
come down from the mountains . . .

“O you in whom the wild, the golden energy, even
Life,
Was sucked down into the dead depths of the Past,
You have fetched Life up out of Earth in you, and it
overruns,
It overruns to the barren world . . .

“I feel your loosed love radiantly
Pouring from your heart to my heart . . .
You have lost your Mother, to find her . . .
For your Mother is Life, is Life!”

XLVII

WHO shall sing of the bridal in valleys of
autumn, among the vineyards and the corn-
fields,

Or tell of the scent of apples on the night of love?
Who shall chant of the blood-red harvest-moon above
the granaries and the wine-press,
And dropping fruits and the kiss of Adam and Eve?

O white miraculous bodies that becoming one, change
to a channel

For all fire of all suns, the ecstasy of Creation:
And by no love of a sterile God in the heavens,
And by no love of a memory or an idol of the Past,
But by strong love of the living God, even the Life in
each other,

Become Creators, bearing the living child!

Now Man, the sower, sows the immortal seed,
Now Woman, the sown, takes up the ancient burden
of the Earth . . .

The Mother-Past loosens her hands from them:
A little child shall lead them . . .

XLVIII

DO they come with bold confident steps in the
crimson sunset,
And the dropping sun beyond the stubble,
And their shadows long behind them on the dust of
the common road?

They are bold, for they come even hand in hand . . .
They are woman and man, great in love,
And free, for that the heart's longing is met and en-
folded,
One by the other . . .

Do they smile at the heavy blood-struggle among the
millions,
And they rising and falling, and doing the tasks of
Earth,
Among death, and despair, and bitter travail, and the
dust of facts?

They smile in a world lit by the light in their own
hearts . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

Their love flowing into each other is great and it
overflows . . .

And what love touches becomes transfigured.

But now do they raise their heads and are their lips
parted

In wonder and in prayer?

Yea, before them, in the dust of the common road,
And bathed in the last light of day,
The Golden City hangs, the Golden City hangs.

There rise her white towers toward the evening star
and the pale moon,
There lie her thronging streets,
There the struggling millions wrestle with confused
dreams,
And are born, and marvel, and die . . .

And woman and man, the human pair,
Go toward the Golden City, and they smile through
tears as they go . . .
Death shall come soon enough, but not till Life is
spent,
Poured out on Earth in the laughter of October
fields of harvest . . .

THE SONG OF LIFE

A child beckons them; it is the timid and ungrown
Future:

And Night, the Mother, the Past, urges them on-
ward . . .

And they go to the Golden City,
They go to the Golden City . . .
It is the City of Life,
And the Life is the Life of Man.

CREATION
A SYMBOLIC DRAMA OF THE LIFE OF MAN

PROLOGUE

*As a photograph taken by lightning flash,
Giving a brief glimpse of the night,
So is this drama . . .*

*Its hero is Life . . .
That which from the beginning rose, and, with swift
changes of garment,
Rushed up from the sun to the human beings we
are . . .*

*Only a glimpse, a flash,
A look into self . . .
For self is the whole of Creation . . .
Then daylight — and darkness . . .*

*Part, curtains . . .
And in the gloom, let the original Chaos be imag-
ined . . .
Life in its own womb, before the stars of the heavens
were,
Or any planet swung in the sky . . .*

*The play begins . . .
Here is — yourself . . .*

I

*[As curtains part, darkness, silence . . . a mist, with
now and then a dim watery light upon it]
[Far echoing voices, thin, almost immaterial.]*

FIRST VOICE

Sleep . . . still sleep . . .

SECOND VOICE

I stir . . .

VOICES

*[Floating like soft winds, with undulation through all
space.]*

Longing . . . longing . . .

FOURTH VOICE

What cries in Chaos?

VOICES

The voice, the lifting voice of a wave that begins,
Begin to whirl,
To circle, and slowly gather,
And circling, roll . . .

CREATION

A GATHERING OF VOICES

Longing . . . life is longing . . .
Life is the lifting up of hands to the never-attained,
Life is the many-thundered charging up receding
 heights . . .
We rise, we sink . . .

FIFTH VOICE

Woe! the Silence quivers . . .
It breaks open . . .

SIXTH VOICE

The Deep begins to march and move,
The Night circles . . .

CHORUS

[A low chant gradually lifting.]

Over the face of the deep,
Over the face of the still deep,
Borne from afar as a faint breath, borne from afar,
Coming far in, and touching with lightest feet,
The spirit of Need moves, troubling the womb of
 night . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

Abide, O you heavens, in Darkness,
Abide, O you hosts, in Silence,

CREATION

In peace abide,
In sleep . . .

CHORUS

[*Rising.*]

Behold, I am a heaven of thirst, I am a sky of hunger,
I am the open mouth of the abyss . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

Abide, O thirsting heaven, in Darkness,
Abide, O hosts . . .

CHORUS

[*With a rising chant.*]

Who shall lift to my desire the feasting light,
And bear wonder of battle to my heart?
Who shall pour the waters of life into the mouth of
heaven,
And give meat to the throat of Chaos?

COUNTER-CHORUS

Be stilled, O bursting sides of Night,
Be hushed back into the arms of yourself,
Lie, O Chaos, in your own embrace.
Be hushed, be still . . .

CHORUS

Something seeks forth from me,
Something arises in dark struggle to lift above me . . .

CREATION

The great waves roll to the shore . . .

They hang breathless;

They hang at death's edge . . .

[*A silence . . .*

Then bursting forth in triumphant chant.]

Creation thunders gloriously and the lips of life are
opened . . .

The glory of the heavens shall be made manifest . . .

The feet of the deep shall laugh up the hills of
night . . .

The heavens at the right hand shall rise and shake
their hair at the under heavens,

The heavens at the left hand shall sing to that shak-
ing forth of challenge . . .

Skies shall declare themselves in flame,

Darkness shall be advertised in fire . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

Then woe unto Creation!

Woe unto Creation that becomes as a Wanderer in
the Night . . .

CHORUS

Glory unto Creation!

Glory unto Creation that becomes a Mother seeking
Children . . .

CREATION

COUNTER-CHORUS

Woe unto the child-bearer . . .

Woe unto all those who conceive and bring forth children . . .

They shall be slain by little things . . .

CHORUS

So sings not the Mother's heart:

But it sings of immortality:

Her child is immortality . . .

Yea, the Mother's heart is singing of vision,

For she conceives beyond herself,

She doth arise above herself,

She putteth forth a hand, she putteth forth a spirit,

Through these she works her will on the world . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

Death shall come . . .

CHORUS

It comes on the lips of her young . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

Sorrow shall come . . .

CHORUS

It comes at the hands of her own . . .

CREATION

COUNTER-CHORUS

Hate shall come . . .

CHORUS

It comes with the kiss of Love . . .

It comes with the smile of Joy . . .

It changes worlds . . .

Laughter, laughter shall be in all my skies,

Children of laughter, children of laughter shall ride
some little atom in the Night . . .

[*A deepening cry.*]

Come!

Out of the depths, out of the under-darkness,

Out of the nether-silence,

Come to my longing, Children . . .

This is life's cry: the cry for children,

For the unborn lures the woman-soul of the world . . .

THE CRY

[*As of wind again.*]

Desire . . . desire . . .

Life is undying desire,

Life is longing . . .

[*Thunder, lightning, welter of chaos.*]

CREATION

COUNTER-CHORUS

Roll down, and asunder,
Roll down, and bear down,
Break in the battle . . .
Then smite, smite!
Oh, darted be on the deeps the javelins of lightning,
Roll, parturient thunder, rumbling in tumbled
chaos . . .
Death, death, and a doom of death on the wanderer . . .

CHORUS

Down, Self, mine enemy!
Down, ancient foe!
I battle for the light . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

You shall not rise . . .
The heavens roll back upon you . . .

CHORUS

I *am* rising: travail of birth is in me . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

Travail of death: woe of annihilation . . .

CREATION

CHORUS

I am the Womb: I labour . . .

I am the Seed: I battle . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

Destruction, doom and destruction overtake you . . .

CHORUS

I am the Womb . . .

I am the Seed . . .

I am the ALL-MOTHER . . .

[*The Battle.*]

CHORUS

Higher, higher!

Madder, wilder, in swirl, turn, delirium,

Flame is born!

COUNTER-CHORUS

Down, down! With darkness, anguish, and heaviest
weight of space,

Quench the blazing!

CHORUS

Victory! flame! Stars are born!

[*Blackness, confusion . . . A wild running forth
as from a flinging scarf, of youths with blow-*

CREATION

*ing flaming hair . . . The STARS . . . they
come dancing, laughing, joyous . . .]*

CHORUS (THE ALL-MOTHER)

[Very low.]

Do I hear many silvery voices,
Do I hear the feet of my desire?
Ah, the heavens, become a sudden harmony,
Grow still with thrill of life . . .
For Love, Love is established . . .
Hark, the Silence breaks with the cry of living children,
Vastness sings out loud with a million lips of flame . . .

STARS

[In chorus.]

Weave in a dance of fires:
And let the glory of our flaming make a path in the
night. . . .
In the Mother's arms we laugh . . .

ALL-MOTHER

[Calling to them.]

Youth undying!

STARS

We hearken . . . we pause and hearken . . .

CREATION

ALL-MOTHER

What news in heaven?

STARS

We drop golden flakes of flame on our paths before
and after . . .

ALL-MOTHER

What is this running of white feet up and down the
slopes of night?

STARS

Heralds of Creation . . .

ALL-MOTHER

Galaxy, where wander you?

GALAXY

Hand in hand, across an arch of the sky . . .

[A crowd of stars, weaving across the stage.]

ALL-MOTHER

And you bright seven?

THE PLEIADES

We twinkle together in a corner . . .

Night, unscalable, overhead,

CREATION

Night, undescendable, under our feet . . .

[*The Stars now divide into Chorus, and Semi-chorus.*]

CHORUS

Whose was the spirit that blew on space, and it blossomed, and stars came forth?

SEMI-CHORUS

Shout, hosts! Creation glories!

CHORUS

Who set us on the everlasting heights?

SEMI-CHORUS

Sing, O ye heavens! Break forth in singing, ye stars!

CHORUS

Was this the dawn, Sky-millions,
When the morning stars sang together and all the sons
of life shouted for joy?

SEMI-CHORUS

Then lift up your eyes on high, oh, ye stars,
And lower your eyes to the depths of the mighty
heavens . . .

CREATION

ALL

We are arrayed in flame
And our throats sing praise to the Mother that bore us,
Glory sing we to the grandeur of the Mother,
Praised be the Mother forevermore.

*[All motion ceases, the Stars stand with raised
faces, and chant together in mighty unison.]*

Arise, shine, for our light is come,
And our fires overrun in our shouts of praise . . .
We sow the sky with seed . . .
Children shall play and circle about our feet,
And they shall drink the life of our flaming heights,
And they shall be bathed and cleansed in our mighty
radiance . . .
For we have our City in the Everlasting,
And the march of our feet is from eternity to eternity.

ALL-MOTHER

We have broken our bread together: I am that
bread . . .

STARS

The taste thereof is the rock of our strength
And the rivers of our light . . .

ALL-MOTHER

You are the quick feet of my longing . . .

CREATION

But where are the eyes through which I shall look on
your glories?

[A cry from the depths beneath the stars.]

THE CRY

The Wanderer passes!

ALL-MOTHER

What lonely cry in the nethermost deeps is that?

*[The STARS crowd and gaze downward as over a
precipice.]*

A STAR

Many a sky below us, he twinkles in the abyss . . .

ANOTHER STAR

I will run down the slants of space to speak him . . .
Dropping from heaven to heaven . . .

[Darkness.]

*[Through the darkness, the STAR, trailing fire
like a Comet, shoots curving downward for a
long time.]*

While he descends, the CHORUS sings.]

ALL-MOTHER

Surely there is no triumph like the triumph of the
Mother . . .

CREATION

When she beholdeth at her breast the lips of her child
And when in her ear its cry soundeth
Then doth she glory because she is the life of life
Who hath all to give, and who gives forever . . .
For her flesh has divided in two,
And the lesser drinks milk of the greater,
And the lesser grows thereupon greater than the
greater,
And the greater lays her down and dies that the lesser
may be greater . . .
Yea, it is on the dead dust of the mother that the child
rises . . .
This is her triumph, to pass beyond herself in a new
body,
For a child is her channel . . .
And so I am anhungered for this triumph . . .
For if children have given me feet
There shall be other children to give me eyes,
And children to give me marvellous lips that sing.

[*A bursting radiance, as from a powerful search-
light. Standing in the glow is a MAN, the
SUN . . . The STAR is poised above him, tip-
toe like a Mercury.*]

STAR

Hail to this lonesome radiance in the gross gulf of
Night!

CREATION

SUN

Hail, Swiftmess, of the long wings and the scattered
tail!

Whence came you, flaming?

STAR

I jostle with the crowd up yonder across the belt of the
heavens . . .

Why lies your path through this Emptiness?

SUN

I am the lonely Wanderer, I am the Sun,
I am the seeker and the hunter after the unattained,
And my belly is flame of desire for a greatness I feel
but see not;

I am ripe with unsown seed,
But the moment is upon me, and mine hour has
come . . .

STAR

What hour, O lonely Wanderer?

SUN

The hour of the depth, and of the dark, and of
death . . .

[*A cloud begins to swallow him.*]

CREATION

STAR

Has death come upon this wanderer?

SUN

Into thee, O profound Mother, I sink and thou gather-
est me up . . .

Thou givest me solace of silence, enfolding Death . . .

Now am I hushed of longing . . .

STAR

Death? death?

I dart a hundred skies away!

[Darts off; a blaze: is gone . . .

The SUN is lost in cloud.]

ALL-MOTHER

[Softly singing.]

Art thou in my arms again, O child?

Hast thou returned to the womb that bore thee, my
own?

This is not death thou seekest, but this is life . . .

And now shalt thou find thy Mother in a young form
of misty glory,

In a young sweet flesh,

And thou shalt be the first of those to taste thyself in
two,

CREATION

O not in one, but two,
Two, that woven together in the ecstasy of the kiss
Shall bring forth life of a greatness beyond star-great-
ness,

And a grandeur beyond all flame . . .

Hush, now, the miracle!

[*Silence . . .*

[*Then, in one pure clear voice.*]

From Adam-Sun in his Eden of still space,

Sleeping, a rib is torn . . .

Eve-Earth is sundered from him . . .

Eve-Earth, the misty woman of the morning skies . . .

[*Out of the cloud gropes a beautiful girl, the
EARTH, hair flying, dazed, hand outstretched.*]

EARTH

Where am I in this newness and dazzle of the world,
On this blue floor that flies with my feet,
In this pure height where mists blow cool about me?

[*Cloud vanishes. SUN lying sleeping, she turns
to him.*]

Oh, sleeping God, Oh, God of the glowing joy,
Lifter in my heart of light, that makes the least drop of
my mists sparkle with fire,
Thou glorious one, thou heroic strength, thou life-
giver,

CREATION

Thine am I, all thine, and forever thine!

[Bends and kisses him . . .

He opens his eyes.]

SUN

Is this then death?

This dream of the much-desired,

This vision of the light-footed dancer and singer, the
beautiful one?

ALL-MOTHER

[Thundering.]

Away! away! Out of his arms, forth to the far un-
known!

SUN

Come to the binding of my arms,

And heed never the thunder running round heaven,

Come, we shall stop the flood of Time, and stand and
remain,

Youth eternal that dies not!

EARTH

No, there is in me the flood that cannot be stopped,

And the tide that turns not . . .

And my feet are hurried into the abyss, and I cannot
bide . . .

CREATION

[Runs from him, he rises and pursues, she keeps circling him.]

SUN

Who has driven us asunder, and who pursues us with
an ancient vengeance?
For I cannot come to you!

EARTH

Your light comes to me . . .

SUN

I toss my glory like a garment over your heaven,
But I cannot follow . . .

EARTH

Your light comes to me,
Your light, beloved, comes to me . . .
Your light, stealing across my breasts with ruddy
kisses,
And lighting the misty hollows between my breasts,
And my body is bathed in dews and begins to sing with
small fires . . .

SUN

Far-held and far-bound
Yet I shall pour on you my mighty desire,
I dart arrows of flame upon you and against you . . .

CREATION

EARTH

Mine ocean shakes himself and he chants against his
bounds in your dawn,
The deep mountains raise their heads and are on fire,
The valleys call to unborn dancing feet,
And I dream of little lips and little eyes and clinging
hands . . .

SUN

I have encompassed you with fire,
I press closer . . .
O madly I sing to your blood and run streams of
ecstasy down through your body,
Madly I sing, catching you up, drawing you close . . .
Now we are bound, are bound . . . now we are lost,
are lost . . .

EARTH

I am stricken, I am killed . . .
No more, O cruel one!

SUN

Wound with the blue sheet of her skies
And with my golden lance,
I smite through my beloved.

EARTH

Death darkens round me . . .

CREATION

SUN

[*Triumphantly.*]

The seed is sown!

EARTH

[*With a cry of anguish.*]

Save me, Mother of the Heavens!

Oh, thou that hast known and thrice-known the carrying and the bearing and the great sorrow of children!

Save me from thy dark fate, save me . . .

Let me go back, O Mother!

SUN

The seed is sown!

[*Sudden darkness.*]

ALL-MOTHER

[*Softly.*]

Not one jot nor one tittle of the pangs of child-bearing
May pass from thee, O thou, thou Earth, beautiful
child;

But thine ancient mother suffers this birth with thee,
And in thy flesh she seeketh to grope and crawl out on
thee and beyond thee;

In little things she becometh great,

CREATION

And in the least of these she becometh the highest . . .
But the least of these is not yet born,
Only the lesser . . .

*[Scene unfolds . . . hills, trees, the sea in the
distance . . .]*

EARTH-CHORUS

The morning shines out of heaven,
And my blue seas are singing silver-flecked on the
shores,
And these my long soft tresses, the winds, blow about
me spiced with earliest Spring . . .
All is magic, all is freshness, all is fire,
Wings are throbbing, leaves are fluttering, waves are
bursting . . .

[A pause.]

Ah, so many sounds of little life . . .
Who sings in the wind? who cries in the sea?
Who whispers in the rustle of the grasses?
Who slides there in the moss?
And what bright wings flicker in the sun?
Speak . . .

TINY VOICE

We are the tiny grass-blades, Mother . . .

CREATION

EARTH-CHORUS

What lifts in you, quivering, changing to green?

VOICE

Flame, flame lifts in us.

A STRANGE VOICE

I am the Serpent, sliding in the moss . . .

ANOTHER

I am the Bee, burning in the sunny air . . .

ANOTHER

I am Flame in Water: I am the glinting Fish . . .

ANOTHER

I am Flame in Air: I am the veering Bird . . .

ANOTHER

I am Flame in Forest: I am the running Beast . . .

EARTH-CHORUS

My children!

Why do you consume each other?

ALL

Flame consumes . . .

CREATION

EARTH-CHORUS

Why do you multiply?

ALL

Flame creates!

EARTH-CHORUS

An agony enters me . . .

You struggle, you tear each other,

You dart poison and death upon each other,

Some go forward, some go backward . . .

When I gather you close, you run from me,

When I drive you forth, you cling to me . . .

Ever death, ever birth, ever pain . . .

But through all runs a longing: and I feel in the air
and the soil

Terrible flame-agitation: desire: tremblings of love . . .

SOME OF THE VOICES

We sing glory to the highest we seek,

Glory to little things . . .

OTHER VOICES

Not we: we sleep in the ooze and the warmth of the
Earth . . .

VOICES

We sing glory to the highest we seek,

Glory to the least of these . . .

CREATION

OTHER VOICES

Not we: we long back, back to the ancient world . . .

[*A Man-like Ape enters.*]

EARTH-CHORUS

Who comes among my children
With a new cunning in his face
And a crooked unrightness?
Who is he that has sprung up into the boughs
And hateth the hard ground?

APE

I am the tail-swinger: I am the Ape.

[*Enter a group of Apes, circling about.*]

EARTH-CHORUS

Gleams are in their brains! Streaks of a strange
dawn!
The beginnings of laughter!

FIRST APE

Something is drawing me to the unknown ground,
And the straightening back and the lifted eyes . . .
I desire to arise above this crooked body . . .

CREATION

SECOND APE

This is not tree-speech . . .

FIRST APE

No, a greater follows me . . . from afar . . .

I go to seek him . . .

THIRD APE

Would you leave the boughs of the trees

For the dark peril of the ground?

Would you leave the swinging sky-beds where we are
safe from our foes?

Are you different from us?

APE

Behold, I cannot otherwise: I am driven . . .

AN OLD APE

But I am your Mother . . . I that have given you suck
Shall hold you here . . .

ANOTHER APE

I am your Mate . . . I that have borne your young
ones,

Shall hold you here . . .

CREATION

FIRST APE

Some god in me calls . . .

Away! I must go find him . . .

[*They pounce on him.*]

[*Darkness.*]

ALL-MOTHER

Since the foundations of the world,
And since first light travelled in long and crossing
 beams through the depths thereof,
The Serpent of Eternity, the Writhing Mother of the
 Abyss

Grows ever more meek and small in her flesh:
For she descended first into the suns of heaven,
And she descended then into the Earth,
And she descended next into the lesser things of the
 Earth,

These runners and crawlers . . .
But now she goeth down into nakedness,
And into the unfanged helplessness of uncovered flesh,
Yea, down to the awaited one, the least of these . . .

But, sing, ye stars, and shout, ye hosts of life,
And let the Mother's heart expand in flaming grandeur,
She goeth down into vastness, she descendeth into great-
 ness,
She sinketh into Man . . .

CREATION

[A dim twilight before the dawn. From among the apes, a human pair, savage, wild, step forth.]

THE APES

[Each in turn.]

Who are these tailless ones? —

They are deformed: they are unlike us —

They have lost a lot of hair.—

What is this? They laugh.

Death to them . . .

VOICES

[From all directions, each in turn.]

The serpent shall sting them . . . for their feet are naked . . .

The tiger spring on them . . . for their hands are not sharpened . . .

The sea overwhelm them . . . for they have no fins . . .

The mountains burst and smother them . . . for they dare walk on the slopes . . .

Cold and famine shall stalk them . . . for they are little and helpless . . .

And the sun sicken them . . .

And flame devour them . . .

[The Apes start slowly toward the pair, who

CREATION

have been groping around, now and then rudely embracing.]

WOMAN

I am very hungry,
And I am very cold,
And I am afraid of this wailing in the wind . . .

MAN

There are bats as large as the sea
Circling on high . . .

WOMAN

[Seeing the apes.]

Beware! Sharp, sharp! Our enemies!

MAN

I shall bite them with my teeth,
Rend them with my nails,
And drink of their blood.

WOMAN

No: beware! They are many!

MAN

Then I must reach beyond myself . . .

CREATION

*[Snatches a bough, tears it clean, and attacks the
Apes as they come.*

They run off.]

MAN

Do they not fear me? Am I not their master?
Yes, and your master?

WOMAN

You are my god and my master . . .
But I too have a hunger in me,
An ancient hunger, a hunger to be a god . . .
It is a pang here,

[Presses her heart.]

A dark sorrow here,
A cry for little hands and for little lips and for little
eyes,
A soft mouth at my swelling breast . . .

MAN

Come, you are mine!

[Roughly embraces her.]

*[The twilight grows lighter, the sun begins to
rise.]*

CREATION

WOMAN

Behold! The Stranger coming again over the sea!
Oh, who is this?

MAN

This is the god, the young god;
Mark, how he leaps up, armed and aflame, from the
 eastern sea . . .
He shall walk the zenith and we shall shrink away from
 his hotness . . .
But he shall go down the slopes of quiet evening,
With stars about his burial.

WOMAN

Strange! but stranger this ground
That smells and grows underfoot . . .

MAN

Hush! that is our Mother . . .
Her skin is warm in the morning sun,
And wet, and sweet . . .

WOMAN

Then who may wave there in the bending of yonder
 tree?

MAN

You see his arms, and the toss of the green-topped head;
He is the rooted god.

CREATION

WOMAN

But hearken, the hollow morning thunder on rocks of
the sands,
Who shouts there?

MAN

The Ancient One,
The Rider of the Many Leaping Herds,
The Chanter beside Cliffs . . .
He is Ocean . . .

WOMAN

And now I see eyes again,
Eyes and tails in the tree-tops . . .
Oh, our enemies . . .

MAN

Cursed be they! cursed be they!
These apes are devils of the woods!

WOMAN

I am afraid . . .
For we are alone, alone . . .
I am in torment . . .

MAN

We must learn to fight,

[*Shakes the bough.*] .

CREATION

We must learn to be masters beneath the gods . . .
We are encircled with enemies.

[*Darkness.*]

ALL-MOTHER

Behold, a darker division has come into the world . . .
A greater light . . .
For Man has eaten of the Tree of Knowledge;
He knows . . .
And now he can never move in the half-sleep of the
 animal and the Earth . . .
Never roll in the harmonious tides of Creation . . .
For knowing, he can choose:
He is the hand I awaited, he is the light . . .
He can choose to slink back to me, and lose himself in
 sloth and abandon:
Or he can choose terrific new creation beyond him-
 self . . .
Away from the Mother is his commandment . . .
He must go forth to the uncreated, to the unfore-
 seeable . . .
Fire-hearted, fire-lashed,
Forever away and away, the unsatisfied Wanderer!
But lo! through him I reach to a new dawn of con-
 sciousness . . .

CREATION

He is flesh on the way toward godhood,
On the way to my greater Self . . .

*[As darkness lifts, a draped fine figure of a man
standing at front on right side . . . Clouds at
rear, and on left and right: open space in
centre.]*

MAN

Out of the darkness I rise in my generation,
As the sun rises,
Into the darkness I sink,
As the sun sinks . . .
But forth from the death spring children as the new
sun rises.

Behold, the march of the army of humanity:
See the ages go by: moving by millions, between the
sun and the moon,
Out of vastness and into vastness,
Impounded life ever pushing forth.

The whip of the great god, Longing, drives them . . .
Away! away!
Away from the All-Mother, away from the sun, away
from the Earth,
Away from the beast,
Away from all mothers . . .

CREATION

So age lifts up from age: so man mounts by climbing
on his own shoulders . . .

*[A pageant of man starts over the stage from right
to left. As they pass, he marks them.]*

From the ape, the savage . . .

Driven from the beast, they make in their own image,
Shadow-gods . . .

This is their longing beyond themselves, shaped in
dream-symbols . . .

And following after, they rise into civilisation . . .

The greater race passes:

Egypt, following Osiris, born of longing,

With sunbright cities of the Nile and the wonder of
Cleopatra,

Drives on the wind, and vanishes . . .

But now Zeus leads . . .

Radiant from the dust, leaps Greece

With golden clouds of gods,

And Helen walks again . . .

But the girls go down to the dust, and the heroes are
no more.

Up rises the sun of Jupiter,

Rome shines:

And Cæsar's legions come from the conquest:

CREATION

But Earth devours the Empire,
And the shouting hosts are hushed . . .

Behold, from the East, the stream . . .
Jehovah's children, the seed of Abraham,
Come out of Asia, David singing, Isaiah thundering,
And following them, the longing of humanity
Shaped in a lowly god, young Jesus . . .

Now under God, the Father,
The Early Christians pray and fast and are persecuted . . .
But they scatter the strange commandment:
Save that ye be born again, ye shall surely die . . .

Christ's Crusaders come . . .
Steel-clad knights and shining kings going down to the
Holy Land,
Bright in the sun they shine, but their banners pass into
death . . .

Lo, then a new god born of man's longing . . .
The god of all men in one,
Democracy . . .
France shouts from the dust, and flames in her
Terror . . .
The Tumbrils rumble by . . .

CREATION

The Eagles of Napoleon move toward St. Helena . . .
[*The procession stops.*]

Now man's manhood begins:
Gone are the childish gods, gone is the Mother Heaven,
Mary is gone, and Mithra, and the Galilean:
There is no god in the past when we long to run home
to a haven:
The new gods are the gods of the future,
Ourselves grown greater . . .

Yet, as of old,
Spring's floods rush down the hills;
The blue sea breaks:
The sowers of seeds are swinging along bright furrows:
The towers of tall cities taking the first gold of the
morning sun, cry Dawn:
The toilers bend to their tasks,
Steam and lightning serve like genii under the hands
of men:
And the whole of the living world is as the flashing
crest of the breaker bursting about us
Risen from the ocean of the past:
The sea that shall lift a new wave when ours has
vanished . . .

Who buried Atlantis
And devoured Egypt?

CREATION

Into what jaws has Athens gone?
Galley-slave and Agamemnon, the great king, are
shovelled under,
And the girl that combed the hair of Helen is dust with
her golden mistress . . .
Cities of great pride, with their multitudes,
Have gone down,
And Spring, that called out the boy Dante into the
streets of Florence,
Silent when Beatrice walked,
Opens wild roses in the ruins over the dead . . .
The snows where Saga heroes fought
Melted with those warriors,
And the desert girls of Arabia are only a song and an
echo in our brains . . .

Who has kept a tally of the souls that have been on the
six continents?
Who marked the nameless slave-boy in Rome, in the
crowd hailing Cæsar home?
Or some mother of Africa, fifteen thousand years ago,
wailing because her child was blind?
In what books are the records kept?
In what divine index are listed the struggles of millions
multiplied by millions?

Ah, we are the wave into which this mounting sea has
risen . . .

CREATION

The height of our curve measures the infinite impulse
of those stopped hearts . . .

The shine of our flashing waters retains the glow of
their vision and their works.

Gathered into immortality they circle and sing in
us . . .

In us, their Heaven,

In us, their Hell,

In us, who are they, breathing again and bargaining
in streets of steel . . .

[*The procession of the moderns starts.*]

Behold, from the doorways,

The school-children pour to the streets, the pavements
golden with morning . . .

The electric traction swings a town's millions to
work . . .

The lovers whisper across the miles in the telephone
booths . . .

The scientist tracks a germ on his microscope's
slide . . .

The mills roar, puddling white iron, the great ships
put to sea . . .

Among the engines humanity yearns, and phantoms
lure us,

Gigantic with tools we weep as of old on our dead,

CREATION

And mammoth with power, we falter, crushed by a
doubt . . .

The same great war: the same great urge: the same
birth and death . . .

Are kisses sweeter than in Carthage?

Is failure more bitter than on the hill of Gethsemane?

Has death lost its sting since Rachel?

Whither goes the pageantry and the vision-clouded
army?

Dust — flame: dust — flame . . .

Out of a cry, silence . . .

Out of silence, a cry . . .

[*Darkness.*]

ALL-MOTHER

The Wanderer, Man . . .

Through him I lift: through him I flame . . .

He seeks the unfound:

He longs for the unattainable . . .

He searches for the Treasure . . .

INTERLOGUE

*So has a glimpse been given
Of all man knows of his coming hence:
That epic writ in his Earth and in his body . . .
Chasmic unorganised forces shaped into Man,
And out of it the brief canto of historic times . . .*

*Background you have seen, yours, mine:
The soul's interior, running in darkening corridors back
 through cycles . . .
The plenteous, all-too-cheap, gross-numbered Past . . .*

*Now see the individual,
Yourself, myself,
Emerge from that enormousness,
Yet containing it,
Passing from birth to death, and in his life
Carrying the repetitions of the process . . .
Not the creation of stars
Profounder than the creation of a soul . . .*

*See him as he is,
In the gritty details of the life of the present instant,*

CREATION

*The harsh, unbudgable facts whose interweaving
Spin at last life, until beneath the surface
We see once more Chaos-Creation surging with epic
song . . .*

*Rise from the music of memory
To the discords of impinging reality . . .
A man appears before you.*

II

[*Darkness lifts . . . A mean room in a London house . . . a low fire burning in the grate . . . An old man staggers in. He is poorly clad, white-haired and bearded. Clutches his neck. Goes to wash-stand, gulps down water.*]

[*Enter LANDLADY.*]

LANDLADY

Well, what ails you?

MAN

[*Gasping.*] I won't trouble you much longer.

LANDLADY

Won't! I should say not. You're going to get out of here.

MAN

Yes, I am going to leave . . .

LANDLADY

It's good you've come to your senses.

CREATION

MAN

So I have . . . Here. [*Hands her a ring.*] Pawn that. It will pay for all.

LANDLADY

Lord love us! [*Changing her attitude.*] Well, after all, stay if you want.

MAN

No, I can't stay.

LANDLADY

And why can't you?

MAN

[*Smiling.*] You see, I am dying . . .

LANDLADY

Oh, come, come, that's talk.

MAN

No. I must die.

LANDLADY

Must — die?

MAN

Yes. I must find — find — out there —

CREATION

LANDLADY

He's out of his head, I fancy . . . What's this you're talking about finding?

MAN

Woman, don't you, too, seek — this —

LANDLADY

No. I don't do anything like that . . .

MAN

Doesn't that mean anything to you?

LANDLADY

Mean?

MAN

I have been searching. I've tried a whole lifetime. God! how I suffered! But I never found it . . .

LANDLADY

What is it?

MAN

I don't know. I've got to die . . .

LANDLADY

But what for?

CREATION

MAN

Then again, with a new body to help me . . .

LANDLADY

Oh, you're speaking of Reincarnation . . .

MAN

Is it that? I must try again . . . I must go down into the Fountain of Youth, and arise new again, young, ready for the next lap of the journey . . . You see, I came from a little Mother once. Now I must go back to a little Mother. She will be a gate to let me through . . .

LANDLADY

You're a raving maniac. Don't come near me.

MAN

Seeing I'm dying, I don't mind telling you, it's you who are the raving maniac. What is Life to you? What is this Opportunity? Why, it's a pint of ale, a quarrel, a kiss; a bit of roast-beef, a clog dance, a brace of children, a few streets of London . . . And yet, ye Gods! right in you, the fires of creation burn: you are a bit of the sun wandering across the ages: you are on the way to godhood: you are driven by the longing that

CREATION

filled our night with stars . . . But you betray your purpose: gut your flame: extinguish yourself in grease . . .

LANDLADY

I'll have the police in if you insult me like that!

MAN

Police! London paving stones! What's under London, I ask you? What's under Earth? What's under heaven? Dig deep enough and you will find fire, fire, fire!

LANDLADY

Lord love us, he means the great London fire. I've heard of that.

MAN

Life is a vision we have ourselves created . . . London shall pass like Athens, civilisations crumble, new Atlantises be buried . . . but I go on: I the Wanderer . . . I change my clothes: I take off my garment of flesh for new raiment: I take off my garment of civilisation for new civilisations . . .

LANDLADY

I ain't got no idea what you're talking about.

CREATION

MAN

No, you haven't. Most people haven't. I can't help it. *I know.* [*He cries out.*] Mother! Mother! I am coming! [*Sinks and dies.*]

LANDLADY

[*Shrieking.*] He's dead! He died raving!
[*Darkness.*]

ALL-MOTHER

The Wanderer has gone down into the womb
again . . .
He shall rest a space from his hard travail in the
silence of the maternal waters . . .
Then he must arise and go on . . .
The Treasure runs before him . . .

[*A neat pleasant bedroom in New York . . . A woman
in bed, and a doctor and nurse attending. Woman
lies unconscious: a new-born baby at foot of bed.*]

DOCTOR

[*Drying his hands on a towel.*] Well, that job's
done.

CREATION

NURSE

[*Fussing with baby.*] Shall I let her husband in?

DOCTOR

Oh, no. Let him wait a bit. We've had enough hysterics. They're all the same, aren't they?

NURSE

The women?

DOCTOR

You'd think she was the first woman in the world to have a baby. [*Pausing over the bed.*] She's still unconscious.

NURSE

Poor thing. So young, too.

DOCTOR

Tush! What is she for? This has been going on for millions of years.

NURSE

But it's *her* first.

DOCTOR

She screamed as if she were giving birth to a mountain.

CREATION

NURSE

Well, you know, doctor, you were born so yourself.

DOCTOR

[*Laughing.*] And look at me now! Was I worth screaming for? [*Knock on door.*] There he goes again. Tell him about it, and tell him to wait. [NURSE *goes out.*] [DOCTOR *stands over bed.*] Hm! eyelids fluttering!

WOMAN

[*Opening her eyes, sighing.*] Ah!

DOCTOR

Yes, yes . . .

WOMAN

[*Strangely.*] Where am I?

DOCTOR

That's right. So. Everything is over . . .

WOMAN

Over? Am I dead?

DOCTOR

You have come through splendidly.

CREATION

WOMAN

Come through? But I was . . . I was torn to pieces . . .

DOCTOR

Tut! it was an easy confinement.

WOMAN

[*Realising.*] Oh . . . but . . . *the baby!*

DOCTOR

It's a fine baby . . .

WOMAN

[*Alarmed.*] Where is it? What have you done with it?

DOCTOR

Be very quiet now, and you'll see the little stranger . . .

WOMAN

Oh, show me my baby . . . [*He picks it up and brings it to her.*] I can't see. I can't even lift my head . . . Don't scold me, doctor . . .

DOCTOR

Here, I'll lay it on the pillow . . . [*Places it beside her.*]

CREATION

WOMAN

[*Turning toward it.*] Ah! Ah! Oh, look! It moves! It's opening its mouth! Oh, God . . . I can't believe it . . .

DOCTOR

It's a real baby . . .

WOMAN

[*In awe.*] But what is it? [*Hesitating.*] A girl?

DOCTOR

It's a boy . . .

WOMAN

Ah! my little one! My son! I feel as if I were going to faint! Let me touch it . . . [*Touches it.*] Forgive me! I've got to cry! I'm too happy . . . [*Sobs.*]

[*Darkness.*]

[*Then, a library . . . Evening . . . Curtained window in back . . . Woman seated near table.*]

WOMAN

[*Sighing.*] Ah, that I were dead . . .

CREATION

[Enter MAN, in overcoat and hat. Comes in abstractedly, goes to her and kisses her.]

MAN

I'm tired . . . [Takes off hat and overcoat.]
Where's the boy?

WOMAN

Oh, playing around somewhere . . .

MAN

What's the matter?

WOMAN

Nothing . . .

MAN

Has anything happened?

WOMAN

No . . .

MAN

You're not ill, are you?

WOMAN

I'm perfectly well . . .

CREATION

MAN

Now this isn't the first time — [*Breaks off irritably.*] Why can't you speak out?

WOMAN

What is there to say?

MAN

[*Angrily.*] The same old story . . . You know I'm worn out.

WOMAN

[*Sharply.*] Yes, I'm the fag-end of your day . . . the dregs . . .

MAN

What would you have me do that I am not doing?

WOMAN

There was a time you begged for my kisses.

MAN

But I am giving you everything . . .

WOMAN

Except yourself . . .

MAN

I am spending soul and body for you . . .

CREATION

WOMAN

It isn't that I am after . . .

MAN

You never think what I'm after . . .

WOMAN

What are you after?

MAN

To stand first in my profession . . . but I never will
— with you!

WOMAN

[*Bitterly.*] Why didn't we die when we loved each
other? . . .

MAN

If you would only be satisfied with the possible . . .
Haven't we a great deal?

WOMAN

I want *all* . . . [*A child's poignant cry rises.*]

MAN

What's that?

CREATION

WOMAN

[*Leaping up in alarm.*] Oh, the baby! [*Calling.*]
Boy! boy!

MAN

Good heavens! If anything's happened to him . . .
[*The cry rises.*] Where is he?

WOMAN

Listen! [*He rushes to her and seizes her.*]

MAN

He's in the room somewhere . . .

WOMAN

Behind the curtain . . .

[*They rush to the curtains, part them . . . The
little boy stands there at the window . . .
Moonlight streams in . . .*]

WOMAN

[*Seizing him up.*] Darling! What is it?

Boy

[*With a wild cry.*] I want the moon . . .

CREATION

WOMAN

But, Sweetheart, no one can have the moon. . . It's up in the sky. See, my fingers only reach to the window . . .

Boy

[*More wildly.*] I want the moon . . .

WOMAN

All right. You shall have it. So. So . . .
[*Quiets him; speaks softly to MAN.*] Get him an orange . . .

MAN

[*Looking at her.*] We all want the moon, and get . . .

[*They smile sadly at each other . . . He starts out.*]
[*Darkness.*]

[*A little sunny garden . . . The baby, now become a youth, sitting with his mother. They are side by side on a stone bench. She is holding his hand.*]

WOMAN

Stay here with me, son.

CREATION

YOUTH

No, I can't.

WOMAN

[*Sighing.*] Why are you so restless?

YOUTH

I don't know. Something over the wall: something out there.

WOMAN

Where?

YOUTH

In the great world . . .

WOMAN

Don't go! You will suffer . . .

YOUTH

I'm not afraid . . .

WOMAN

But you don't know the bitterness of life, the disillusionment and disappointment. I only want to save you from what I suffered . . .

YOUTH

But I just want something to happen . . .

CREATION

WOMAN

Something will. You will die . . .

YOUTH

I must die anyway . . .

WOMAN

But you're so eager. You're just the kind that will be destroyed. Haven't I given you everything?

YOUTH

But I want . . . I don't know what I want . . .

WOMAN

And you have been so safe here . . . I have taken such good care of you . . . I let you grow up as if you were in a garden . . . the garden of my love . . . Is that your repayment for my sacrifices? You'll leave me?

YOUTH

It's like dying, sweet Mother. But — I can't help it.

WOMAN

[*Bitterly.*] Then why have I taken such trouble . . . just to lose you! It isn't worth while being a mother.

CREATION

YOUTH

But my father . . . didn't my father have to leave
his mother?

WOMAN

[*Searchingly.*] I know now. You are in love . . .

YOUTH

[*Sharply.*] No . . .

WOMAN

Some woman has tempted you . . .

YOUTH

I hate women . . .

WOMAN

All women?

YOUTH

All except you . . . [*She turns from him . . . Silence.*] Mother!

WOMAN

What is it?

YOUTH

Don't hold me back. Let me go . . .

CREATION

WOMAN

What draws you forth?

YOUTH

Oh, I don't know. It's . . . it's . . . [*Suddenly.*]
It's like Jason, looking for a Treasure.

WOMAN

A Treasure? What Treasure?

YOUTH

[*Breaking from her.*] I can't stand this any
longer . . . [*Starts toward rear.*]

WOMAN

[*Beseeching.*] Boy! boy!

YOUTH

Good-bye! I must go! [*Rushes out . . .*]
[*Darkness.*]

[*A comfortable study. PROFESSOR in armchair, with
liqueur glass in his hand . . . YOUTH opposite him.*]

PROFESSOR

You won't have a drop of this Benedictine?

CREATION

YOUTH

[*Shyly.*] No, thanks. I don't drink . . .

PROFESSOR

At my age the fires begin to wane. I have to pour in fuel. But you — [*Smiling.*] You are all flame . . .

YOUTH

Professor, I don't know why I'm so restless and unhappy . . .

PROFESSOR

Really unhappy?

YOUTH

I don't know what I want . . .

PROFESSOR

Perhaps you are . . . in love?

YOUTH

No. I haven't any use for women . . .

PROFESSOR

[*Smiling.*] Why not?

YOUTH

They're too silly.

CREATION

PROFESSOR

All of them?

YOUTH

Except my mother . . .

PROFESSOR

Ah! And she?

YOUTH

There's no one like her in the world . . .

PROFESSOR

Exactly . . . She doesn't exist in reality . . .

YOUTH

What do you mean?

PROFESSOR

A child cannot know the mother. He comes to her, a baby, and she is earth, and sky, and God to him . . . He never recovers from that dream of her. She is never a woman to him: but merely an ideal.

YOUTH

But you don't know *my* mother.

CREATION

PROFESSOR

And so you seek for this ideal in other women . . . and never find it. They are not your mother . . . [*The YOUTH is silent.*] Love, though, may find a way! [*Silence.*]

YOUTH

No, I don't want love . . .

PROFESSOR

[*Smiling.*] "Man delights me not, nor woman neither."

YOUTH

[*Hurt.*] Why do you quote Hamlet?

PROFESSOR

Why do you act Hamlet?

YOUTH

[*Melancholy.*] But I am a sort of Hamlet . . .

PROFESSOR

All high-minded youth is . . . You don't know what you want, and so you have — nothing.

YOUTH

[*Blurting out.*] But I do know, in a way . . .

CREATION

PROFESSOR

Oh, you do? What is it?

YOUTH

I don't like to tell.

PROFESSOR

[*Sipping the Benedictine.*] You can tell me.

YOUTH

Then it's to make the debating team.

PROFESSOR

You have your heart set on that?

YOUTH

My heart and soul. If I could win that —

PROFESSOR

What then?

YOUTH

Oh, I'd never be unhappy again . . .

PROFESSOR

You are sure?

CREATION

YOUTH

Think of it! Out of all the students who tried!
Then my way would be clear before me . . .

PROFESSOR

To do what?

YOUTH

To be a great public speaker . . . a leader of the
people . . .

PROFESSOR

You're sure?

YOUTH

Yes . . .

PROFESSOR

[*Smiling.*] Well, you have won it . . .

YOUTH

[*Amazed.*] I?

PROFESSOR

Yes . . . you . . .

YOUTH

[*Bursting out.*] I've won it . . . oh, when my
mother hears this . . . [*He is silent; radiant.*]

CREATION

PROFESSOR

It is fine, isn't it? And I know you are equal to it . . .

YOUTH

Equal to what?

PROFESSOR

The responsibility . . .

YOUTH

The responsibility?

PROFESSOR

Surely you've thought of that. The need now to win for the University — to show in yourself our very best . . .

YOUTH

[*Hesitating.*] Yes . . . yes . . . [*Silence.*] I hadn't thought of that. [*Doubtfully.*] Do you think I am the man to do it?

PROFESSOR

Do you? [*Silence. The YOUTH is downcast.*] Well, what is it?

YOUTH

I don't know.

CREATION

PROFESSOR

[*Smiling.*] Then it isn't making the team that ful-
fils all life for you?

YOUTH

No. What shall I do? What shall I do?

· PROFESSOR

[*Sipping at his glass.*] There will always be plenty
to do.

YOUTH

[*Radiant again.*] But I've won it . . . I have won
it . . .

[*Darkness.*]

[*Balcony . . . garden . . . Moonlight . . . Enter
YOUTH . . .*]

YOUTH

She must come . . .

[*Throws dirt up on window . . . A girl comes
out on balcony.*

She leans over . . .]

CREATION

GIRL

Who is it?

YOUTH

It's I . . .

GIRL

Go away then . . .

YOUTH

I can't. I lay awake until I couldn't bear it any longer. Then I stole here . . .

GIRL

[*Sighing.*] The grass must be wet . . .

YOUTH

It is asleep around my feet . . . Loosen your hair . . .

GIRL

I was just brushing it when you came.

YOUTH

So late to get back . . . And I not with you . . .

GIRL

Please go home. It's too late . . .

CREATION

YOUTH

Please loosen your hair . . .

[*Silence . . .*

*She releases her hair . . . leans . . . it falls
low . . .]*

GIRL

Now I am hidden . . .

YOUTH

The moon turns you to Juliet . . .

GIRL

Then you are Romeo . . .

YOUTH

No. Something wilder. It goes back further . . .
Fire of the sun . . .

GIRL

Sun on the desert . . .

YOUTH

Arabia . . .

GIRL

Oh, please go from me now . . . or . . .

CREATION

YOUTH

Or what?

GIRL

I shall come to you . . .

YOUTH

Come: before I climb up . . .

GIRL

No. Go . . . Listen . . .

[*A wind sounds.*]

YOUTH

It is near dawn . . . A wind from the sea is rising,
and the grasses whisper . . . What was that?

GIRL

A bobolink opening his door, I guess. He is looking
at the weather.

YOUTH

Hark! Apples falling in the orchard!

GIRL

What else do you hear now?

CREATION

YOUTH

Earth is glad . . . She is glad because of us. She is lifting us up for each other. Can't you taste it?

GIRL

Taste what?

YOUTH

The Earth . . . in this dim light . . . these smells of ground and foliage . . . these shadows . . . this beauty . . . rising through us, crying out for each other . . .

GIRL

[*Sighing.*] Don't . . .

YOUTH

And you . . . why that gleam along your bare white arm? And the shadow of hair over your face when you move? And the heave of your breast? You are hiding your eyes from me . . .

GIRL

[*Faltering.*] Hidden with tears . . .

YOUTH

Then come, come . . . Do not delay. We shall so soon be dead . . .

CREATION

GIRL

I cannot . . .

YOUTH

You must . . .

GIRL

Oh, do you love me? .

YOUTH

Love you? Longing . . . my whole life is longing . . . it is a fire burning toward you . . . it is as if my spirit darted arrows of flame upon you . . . For you I have longed since I was born . . .

GIRL

Ah, you say that now . . .

YOUTH

I say it forever . . . This is the reason I came into the world . . . to seek till I found you . . . to grope till I was blinded by your face . . .

GIRL

Would we could die then now!

YOUTH

Live now! Taste this thing, this Life, this Earth-

CREATION

Life, this burning, miraculous fluid: taste it while yet it comes to our lips . . . It is the wine of which we can never get enough . . . Come, before the light casts away night, and the burnt-out stars are dropped in the debris of the sky . . . Come, while darkness still hides us, still leaves us alone with each other . . . Here, in my arms . . .

GIRL

I can resist no longer . . .

[*She disappears, emerges below . . . He goes toward her . . .*]

YOUTH

You are deathly pale.

GIRL

Beloved!

[*They rush into each other's arms.*]

YOUTH

My adored one! I have found the Treasure!

[*They kiss . . .*

A pause . . .]

YOUTH

[*Whispering.*] Oh, my beloved . . . we shall have

CREATION

each other forever . . . [*A short pause.*] Do you doubt it?

GIRL

But won't it interfere with the work?

YOUTH

What work?

GIRL

As a leader . . . a leader of the people?

YOUTH

Oh, that! Do you think I was really after that? No, it's you. And winning a place in the world for you.

GIRL

[*Weeping.*] This is real love then! This is real love! . . .

[*They embrace tenderly.*]

[*Darkness.*]

[*A pleasant bedroom; sunlight streaming . . . The girl, now a woman, in bed . . . DOCTOR, NURSE, new-born babe.*]

CREATION

DOCTOR

[*Drying his hands.*] Well, that's over . . .

NURSE

[*Fussing with baby.*] She suffered pretty badly . . .

DOCTOR

[*Sighing.*] Yes. I suppose ever since life started it suffered like this to give birth to Life. Birth is pain.

NURSE

But how glad she'll be. Is she coming to?

DOCTOR

I think so. Hush!

WOMAN

Ah!

DOCTOR

Yes, yes . . .

WOMAN

Where am I?

DOCTOR

That's right. So. Everything is over . . .

WOMAN

Over? Am I dead?

CREATION

DOCTOR

You have come through splendidly . .

WOMAN

Come through? But I . . . I went down into utter darkness . . . it was not to be endured . . .

DOCTOR

It was hard — but it's over . . .

WOMAN

[*Realising.*] Oh . . . but . . . *the baby!*

DOCTOR

It's a fine baby . . .

WOMAN

Where is it? I can't see it . . .

DOCTOR

You shall see it . . .

WOMAN

Show me my baby . . .

[*He picks it up, and brings it to her.*]

WOMAN

I can't see. I can't even lift my head. How strange!

CREATION

DOCTOR

There, I'll lay it on the pillow . . .

[Places it beside her.]

WOMAN

[Turning toward it.] Ah! ah! Oh, look! it moves! it's opening its mouth! I can't believe it! Is it real?

DOCTOR

[Laughing softly.] Real enough . . .

WOMAN

[In awe.] But what is it? *[Hesitatingly.]* Is it a girl?

DOCTOR

It's a boy . . .

WOMAN

Ah! My little one! my son! Let me touch it . . . *[Touches it.]* Oh, darling! Now I know why I suffered so. For you. And now I know why I love you so . . .

[Enter YOUTH, now a man. Goes to bedside.]

CREATION

MAN

Dearest!

WOMAN

Ah, look . . . a boy . . .

MAN

So . . . a boy . . . a son . . . [*Stifling a sob.*]
At last . . . and there he is . . . real, living . . .
my wife . . . [*Stoops and kisses her.*] Little . . .
mother . . .

WOMAN

[*Coiling his neck with her arms.*] Oh, my husband . . .

MAN

Our child . . . May I take him up?

WOMAN

Be very careful . . .

MAN

So. So. [*Lifts the baby tenderly.*] What a miracle! Alive . . . it looks around—it opens its mouth. [*As if to himself.*] At last . . . Now I have found the something beyond myself: the something we have created: the Treasure.

CREATION

WOMAN

Yes — *our* Treasure . . .

[*Darkness.*]

[*Then, a parlour with large French windows in back.
The MAN and a WISE WOMAN, older than he.*]

WISE WOMAN

Why isn't your wife here?

MAN

[*Irritably.*] She is busy with the children . . .

WISE WOMAN

But in this hour — the hour of your triumph, your fame . . .

MAN

It isn't her hour. I have gone about my work in spite of her. She was jealous of it . . .

WISE WOMAN

Tried to spoil it?

CREATION

MAN

Not deliberately — but always calling me off — always reminding me I am her husband and her children's father.

WISE WOMAN

Doesn't that mean anything to you?

MAN

It means a great deal — but not enough. I thought to have children would ease my longing. It didn't. I'm driven on: I'm restless: I want to conquer heaven knows what . . . I want to shine before the world . . .

WISE WOMAN

And that will satisfy you?

MAN

It must . . .

WISE WOMAN

Will there be nothing left to long for?

MAN

Not as I used to long . . . I will have my fulfillment . . .

CREATION

WISE WOMAN

[*Smiling.*] You are still young . . .

MAN

You always speak mysteriously. Why don't you tell me plainly?

WISE WOMAN

When you are ready, you will know . . .

MAN

But when is that?

WISE WOMAN

When you have grown to that level.

MAN

What level?

WISE WOMAN

Wait, and see!

[*A great shouting outside growing louder and louder.*]

MAN

[*Drunk.*] Hear it! They come! This is my hour! They acclaim me! I am the hero! I shine forth!

[*Goes to windows, flings them open . . .*]

[*Shouts: "Hurrah! Hurrah!"*]

CREATION

MAN

Thanks, friends, thanks!

[Bows, closes the windows: shouts die . . .]

WISE WOMAN

Well, have you found the Treasure?

MAN

Do you doubt it?

WISE WOMAN

Do you?

MAN

[Stoutly.] I have found it!

WISE WOMAN

[Smiling.] Then may joy attend you . . .

[Darkness.]

[Office . . . MAN at his desk. He is somewhat older. A youth enters.]

MAN

You know why I sent for you?

CREATION

YOUTH

Why, Father?

MAN

I had a telegram from your mother . . .

YOUTH

[*Shaken.*] Nothing is the matter with her?

MAN

She is ill.

YOUTH

[*Frightened.*] Is it serious?

MAN

It is dangerous . . .

YOUTH

What is it?

MAN

Pneumonia . . .

[*Silence. YOUTH slowly seats himself . . .*]

YOUTH

I'm — I'm dreadfully sorry.

CREATION

MAN

Son, we must take the five o'clock train together. Even then we may be too late . . . Get your things together . . .

YOUTH

[*Agitated.*] I'm sorry, father . . .

MAN

Sorry? What?

YOUTH

I can't go with you . . .

MAN

Can't go with me, when your mother is dying?

YOUTH

No. I can't go.

MAN

Do you know what you are saying?

YOUTH

I'm sorry . . .

MAN

[*Bursting out.*] Sorry! Don't let me hear that again! Sorry! You are a sorry son! You have been

CREATION

the bitterest disappointment of my life! I looked to you to carry on my work . . .

YOUTH

[*Challenging.*] I have my own work . . .

MAN

Your own paltry indolence! Work? Child's play! You, the son of a worker!

YOUTH

It is what I live for . . .

MAN

Let me hear no more of it. Go your way . . .

[*YOUTH rises.*]

YOUTH

I shall go my way . . .

MAN

But with never a bit of help from me . . . To have brought you up all these years, for this! And now, in this hour, to refuse to go with me!

YOUTH

I can't leave her . . .

CREATION

MAN

Her? Leave whom?

YOUTH

Her . . .

MAN

Her before your mother? What ails her? . . .

YOUTH

She is ill, too . . .

MAN

And you put her before your mother!

YOUTH

I love her . . . You left your mother . . .

MAN

Yes, when I was rash and young! But out of my experience I tell you what you must know . . .

YOUTH

[*Harshly.*] I'll have my own experience, if you please.

MAN

Have it then. We are done with each other . . .

CREATION

YOUTH

I am sorry . . .

MAN

Sorry? Go at once!

[YOUTH goes out reluctantly . . . MAN stands alone . . . Enter his SECRETARY.]

SECRETARY

A telegram . . .

MAN

Read it to me . . .

[SECRETARY opens it and starts to read.]

SECRETARY

"Your wife—" [Stops short.] Oh!

MAN

[Staggering, holding to the desk.] Read on!

SECRETARY

[Faltering.] "Your wife passed away without pain at two this afternoon."

MAN

You may go.

[SECRETARY goes out, closing the door.]

CREATION

MAN

[*With a groaning cry.*] Oh! So life breaks to pieces! All! All! . . . What is it for? Why was I born?

[*Darkness.*]

[*Room in MAN'S House. Large windows in rear.*
Enter MAN and REPORTER.]

MAN

But this is impossible.

REPORTER

You refuse to change your position?

MAN

Am I right, or wrong?

REPORTER

Of course, between ourselves, you are right. Your investigations have proved beyond doubt that these men are guilty. But in the present state of popular feeling —

MAN

Fomented by your damnable newspapers —

CREATION

REPORTER

We have to give the people what they want.

MAN

Never what they need?

REPORTER

We live on their patronage.

MAN

Then you do not serve the public . . .

REPORTER

Hm. There are ways and ways of serving . . .

MAN

Then go to your paper, and print the worst. I know what service I have rendered, and I know what motives drove me. I know that I have put my time and my gifts in the hands of the people. I have tried to do my share . . . And in the end the people will stand with me . . .

REPORTER

Then you will not withdraw?

MAN

An unqualified refusal . . .

CREATION

REPORTER

You had best not mislead yourself about the people. There is a mass meeting not three blocks away. I shouldn't be surprised if you received a visit this evening . . .

MAN

That, too?

REPORTER

You see, the people don't want to be served. They want to be victimized. They want to be fooled.

MAN

If I believed that, my last remaining shred of faith would be lost . . .

REPORTER

Perhaps you will understand then why we newspapers make necessary compromises with the truth . . .

MAN

I have nothing more to say . . . [*Sounds in distance.*] What is that?

REPORTER

[*Alert.*] As I said. Come quickly: we will get out at the back.

CREATION

MAN

Do you mean to say that a mob is coming?

REPORTER

Listen! [*Ominous noise of shouting, and trampling of feet.*] There is no mercy in that beast.

MAN

[*Aghast.*] So this is the end of my dream! That, too!

REPORTER

Come, while there is time [*Starts for door.*]

MAN

If this is true, I am done. I shake the dust of this country from my feet. I become a wanderer . . .

[*An overwhelming noise of people outside.*]

REPORTER

Come! There is yet a moment!

[*Shouts: "Lynch him! Kill him!"*]

MAN

[*Shaking his fist.*] We are foes from henceforth!

[*A stone crashes through the window. Wild shouts.*]

CREATION

REPORTER

Are you coming?

MAN

Yes . . . [*Pauses, cries out.*] Life is a fraud. There is no god in heaven or in man. It's a vile trick some devil has played on us . . . From now on I seek peace . . . Peace . . . [*Noise. He leaves . . .*]

[*Darkness.*]

[*A small room, with high dormer windows in back. Table: papers: books . . . MAN pacing restlessly up and down. His FRIEND, seated.*]

FRIEND

So you have stopped writing . . .

MAN

[*Bitterly.*] It was a fad. Just like art-collecting . . .

FRIEND

What a pity!

MAN

A pity? Did you care for my work?

CREATION

FRIEND

Well — uh — it was a bit pessimistic — a bit suicidal . . .

MAN

[*Pausing, and looking at him.*] It was the truth. What sort of a stomach has this generation anyway? [*Paces on, restlessly.*] Yet what is true? What is false? I have gorged myself on books: stuffed on art: talked with specialists . . . the doctors disagree . . . [*Paces restlessly; more bitterly.*] But it is not that. Life has lost its flavour . . .

FRIEND

You mean you have no interests?

MAN

Nothing stirs me any more. Knowledge is vain, love dead, and nature a far off spectacle . . .

FRIEND

Perhaps you need a rest . . .

MAN

Good God, rest? Hark! [*They are silent.*] Where is there more peace on earth than here? Yet to-morrow I leave . . .

CREATION

FRIEND

Where shall you go?

MAN

Anywhere. Beyond. But I shall find nothing. Wherever I go, I shall stumble again on myself: on this restless caged animal within me . . . and this shall drive me further.

FRIEND

But once I remember you used to find strength in nature . . .

MAN

[*Going to the window, flinging it open.*] Look. There it is. And I know it is beautiful. I know the lake films an inverted sky, and that purple shadows are on the mountains. I know that the panorama of heaven is majestic and solemn. I see, I know . . . but I do not feel. I do not realise this world, as once I did. Its meaning has fled.

FRIEND

Perhaps its meaning has changed for you.

MAN

Changed for the worse. I know that bright star

CREATION

there is a huge skyful of flame; a rolling colossus, and that the ray of light that strikes from it, and is caught by my eye, has darted a hundred years to reach me; yes, the star I see is the star of a hundred years ago, and if to-night it were destroyed, for a hundred years more man would see it . . . So huge is space, so small is man . . . This I know; but I do not care. What of it? Make a vat of darkness, and drop a pinch of dust in it . . . and the dust is you and I . . . What of it?

FRIEND

But we see and know all this, we creatures . . .

MAN

Yes, by a crooked trick, we have this awakening . . . But the stiff yellow bodies on the dissecting tables of the morgue, lie freezing on the marble, and refute by their pitiable nakedness, the boasting cries of religion and art . . . Man whistles to keep his courage up, and he calls his whistling, revelation . . .

FRIEND

[*Roused.*] If Life is this then, why not die? Why not get out of it?

MAN

[*Bitterly.*] That is it. I cannot. I am driven to

CREATION

seek. I long. I feel as if I were insulated from life, and could not break through. What is the answer? How find the Treasure?

FRIEND

[*Sadly.*] I do not know.

MAN

Ah, that is the answer: we do not know.

[*Darkness.*]

[*A mountain top . . . From one side enters WISE WOMAN, from the other, the MAN. He is much older . . .*]

WISE WOMAN

We meet again.

MAN

[*Sadly.*] After many years . . .

WISE WOMAN

Well, friend, have you found it?

MAN

Found what?

CREATION

WISE WOMAN

The Treasure . . .

MAN

[*Angrily.*] There is no Treasure. Life is a fraud . . .

WISE WOMAN

But you are still seeking?

MAN

Seeking? . . . I am restless . . .

WISE WOMAN

And full of longing?

MAN

I am driven across the face of the earth. I snatch bubbles. They burst on my fingers.

WISE WOMAN

Why do you snatch them?

MAN

My heart is starved: it would eat. It is fire: it would consume.

CREATION

WISE WOMAN

And you have suffered much?

MAN

I have suffered damnation. I have been blown hither and thither in the winds of Hell . . .

WISE WOMAN

Has the world turned against you?

MAN

Yes. I told them the truth . . .

WISE WOMAN

And what is that truth?

MAN

That life is a fraud, and man is to be pitied.

WISE WOMAN

Man is to be pitied? No! Man is to be glorified!

MAN

He seeks, and finds not.

WISE WOMAN

Then he seeks wrongly.

CREATION

MAN

I sought love: I sought children: I sought work
and fame . . . I sought even to serve mankind . . .
I sought knowledge and wisdom . . . All has failed
me . . .

WISE WOMAN

And nothing remains?

MAN

My wife is dead: my children have left me: the
world spurns my work . . .

WISE WOMAN

One thing remains.

MAN

And that is?

WISE WOMAN

Yourself.

MAN

Myself? I wish I were dead . . .

WISE WOMAN

You are dead.

MAN

It is true . . .

CREATION

WISE WOMAN

Dead are they who seek for the Treasure in the world: living are they who seek for the Treasure in themselves . . . Only there may you create beyond yourself . . .

MAN

I have travelled the world —

WISE WOMAN

You have run from the Treasure: you have seized ever the outside. Now pause and go inside.

MAN

Ah, yes, at least there, comfort: sweet illusions: escape from the world. There I am at home, in the house of my memories.

WISE WOMAN

You do not understand me . . .

MAN

My Mother: I see her in the Garden. I see the Balcony where I whispered of love. I see my little new-born son . . .

CREATION

WISE WOMAN

[*Sharply.*] Yes, you sink back to the past and embrace . . . ghosts . . .

MAN

The dead . . .

WISE WOMAN

The Mothers . . .

MAN

What else may I do then, going into myself?

WISE WOMAN

Renounce the Mothers! Renounce your dead selves . . .

MAN

Ah, but what shall I have then?

WISE WOMAN

Your living self. Go deeper than memory. Go down, down into the source of yourself: down into Life, into the All-Mother. Dive into those maternal waters and arise reborn.

MAN

The All-Mother?

CREATION

WISE WOMAN

The stars, the night and the Earth, this woven texture, knotted with suns and planets: this is the womb of the All-Mother . . . and we the seed in her womb . . . Save that you be born again of her, you shall surely perish . . .

MAN

[*Warily*] You mean . . . God?

WISE WOMAN

I mean, Life . . .

MAN

But I do not accept your belief. This All-Mother is an image you have created . . .

WISE WOMAN

Even so. Man has risen through images . . . He was raised through thinking on Zeus, he was lifted by the Cross . . .

MAN

Then he was lifted by lies . . .

WISE WOMAN

But he was lifted . . .

CREATION

MAN

To what?

WISE WOMAN

Into Life . . .

MAN

It means nothing to me . . .

WISE WOMAN

The meaning lies in the action: the answer is in the effort. Are you really seeking? Will you try it?

MAN

What is the way?

WISE WOMAN

The way within? The way into the All-Mother?
The way into self?

MAN

Yes . . .

WISE WOMAN

A way of peril. Many going there, sinking out of reality, and far from the shining world, remain, and return never. They are sealed in themselves; they stalk in a vision-haunted Hades, among stars of illu-

CREATION

sion, in the twilight of a phantom-moon and a ghost-sun. They are the insane . . .

MAN

[*Shuddering.*] It is too perilous . . .

WISE WOMAN

More perilous not to go. You are dead now. Bury yourself again in the womb of the All-Mother, and down there, struggle. Jacob wrestled with the angel, Christ with Satan. Go you, too, and wrestle in your own depths. Wrench open the womb again; suffer the agony and blood of birth-throes. Then you shall be new-born. Young. Strong. Heroic . . .

MAN

[*Shaking his head.*] It is too late . . .

WISE WOMAN

Try it, friend . . .

[*Darkness.*]

[*A little Study. Late at Night. The MAN in an armchair, beside the desk. Brooding.*]

CREATION

MAN

I am dead. I am dead . . . [*Pause.*] She said —
into yourself . . . but again and again I have gone
into myself . . . lost . . . with old faces, beloved
faces . . . shadow-plays, illusions . . . and struggled
there, as now I struggle, as now I sink . . .

[*He broods, head on hand . . . Silence. The scene changes; a strange watery place: full of phantom shapes; waving glimpses of hands, faces, play of lights . . . a sort of Chaos . . . The MAN sinking slowly from the top through toward the bottom . . .*]

MAN

[*Muffled voice.*] Down . . . down . . . [*Murmurs of many voices.*] Deeper and deeper into myself . . . [*Pauses midway down.*] The world is gone . . . the streets have vanished . . . the faces of the living are no more . . . [*Several PHANTOMS float toward him.*] Who are you?

FIRST PHANTOM

I am yourself in the day of your triumph . . .

MAN

Bring me to life . . .

CREATION

FIRST PHANTOM

No . . .

MAN

Help me . . . I sink . . .

SECOND PHANTOM

[*On level below.*] Remember me?

MAN

I think I do . . .

SECOND PHANTOM

I am yourself that made love in the garden.

MAN

Oh, resurrect me . . .

SECOND PHANTOM

[*Is silent.*]

MAN

Sinking . . . sinking . . .

THIRD PHANTOM

[*On level below, touching his arm.*] I am yourself
that was a child in your Mother's arms . . .

CREATION

MAN

Ah, dear one, you I could brood upon. Yes, I am you. I am a child again. Where is my Mother?

THIRD PHANTOM

Hush, she comes!

[*Phantom MOTHER approaches.*]

MOTHER

Son . . .

MAN

Mother . . .

MOTHER

Find peace here. I am heaven. I am the beginning of life and the end. All that goes between is dirt, despair, sweat. In my arms was Paradise. And it shall be so again . . .

MAN

The longing of humanity is mine . . . the dream of heaven . . . the dream of finding the mother again . . .

MOTHER

I hold you forever . . .

CREATION

MAN

Wake me . . . wake the dead.

MOTHER

Why wake . . . to pain, incessant struggle, the life of Earth? Sleep in yourself, in me, sweet son . . .

MAN

But I am sinking . . . beyond memory . . . deeper . . . deeper . . . [*He sinks further. A great shape approaches.*] August presence, your name?

PHANTOM

Earth . . .

MAN

What is this?

[*A furious noise, flames leap, demons rush to and fro.*]

DEMONS

We are your deeper self! The buried madness, the red terror, the breath of primal things . . . We rend; we scald! we scorch!

[*They rush toward him.*]

MAN

[*Groaning.*] Deeper! deeper!

CREATION

[*The scene becomes as at the beginning of the play
. . . Chaos . . . The man has reached the bot-
tom.*]

MAN

All-Mother . . .

A VOICE

[*Far echoing, thin, immaterial.*] Sleep . . . sleep
. . . sleep . . .

ANOTHER

Longing . . .

ANOTHER

Life is longing . . .

CHORUS

I am a heaven of thirst, I am a sky of hunger . . .

COUNTER-CHORUS

Abide, abide in Darkness . . .

MAN

Here is my rest. Here is my abiding-place . . .

CHORUS

Up to the light! Rise . . .

CREATION

COUNTER-CHORUS

Remain, child . . .

I am the Mother . . .

She giveth her beloved, sleep . . .

CHORUS

Rise from death! Be born!

MAN

Jacob wrestled with the angel, Christ with
Satan . . .

[A shape approaches.]

SHAPE

I hold you here . . .

MAN

Take off your arms . . . take away your drowsy
sense-stealing breath . . . ah, poppies, the lotus, the
root of dream and vision I bite on . . . All is illusion:
all is phantasy . . .

CHORUS

Cast him off. Arise. Be born again . . .

SHAPE

I lull . . . I lull . . .

CREATION

MAN

No, but I shall struggle with you though I be blasted forever! Off, demon, off!

[*They wrestle.*]

CHORUS

[*In triumphant chant.*]

Creation thunders gloriously and the lips of life are
opened . . .

The glory of the heavens shall be made manifest . . .

The skies shall declare themselves in flame,

And darkness shall be advertised in fires.

[*Thunder, lightning.*]

[*Darkness . . .*]

MAN

[*Crying out.*] Naked . . . little . . . what terror! what loneliness! Is there no help in the world? No one to turn to? I am dying. [*With a wild cry.*] Mother!

[*A cleaving of light from the top down . . . the
MAN swirls upward to the surface . . .*]

[*Darkness; then light. He is at his desk again,
in the study . . . He rises amazed.*]

CREATION

MAN

Was it death — or birth? Oh, light as air, quick as joy . . . [*Laughs softly.*] Not my mother — no, I slew my own childish self. I lost my life, and I have found — what? [*Lifting a face of awe.*] Is it thou, O Life, with the music of heaven enfolding me, is it thou, O Inscrutable? Am I reborn of thee, mighty Mother? Was it this that the prophets knew and the psalmist sang? [*With a glad cry.*] To work! to work!

[*Darkness.*]

[*Room . . . Woman, in deep chair, reclining against pillows, one foot bandaged.*]

[*Noise outside.*]

YOUNG VOICES

Good-bye! Good-bye!

VOICE OF THE MAN

[*Joyously.*] Good-bye, boys!

[*Enter the MAN.*]

MAN

I could hardly shake them off . . .

CREATION

WOMAN

What was it to-day?

MAN

Oh, it was supposed to be protozoa . . .

WOMAN

But actually?

MAN

I taught them about, well — life.

WOMAN

What about life?

MAN

The spending of it, as Nature does . . .

WOMAN

The students love you, dear: you give them so much . . .

MAN

Give? I can't help giving! Is it any credit to the sun that he sheds light and heat? . . . and since that wonderful time . . . that time I learned to slay self in order to win self, there is no joy but giving . . .

CREATION

WOMAN

But it seems to me that you give equally to everything — whether it's reading the news, writing a book, or shaping a dull lad into a student . . .

MAN

It's true . . . life flows from me, through me . . .

*[He comes to her; he leans and speaks tenderly,
smoothing her cheek.]*

Darling, how are you?

WOMAN

So, so.

MAN

Still pain?

WOMAN

A little!

MAN

A bad accident that . . .

WOMAN

Ugh! when I think of it — the wheel running over my foot — the seeing red — the lightning brand of pain — the swooning —

CREATION

MAN

Don't think of it . . .

[He goes to table and gets basin and rag.]

WOMAN

You're not going to wash it?

MAN

Some one must do it, and since the nurse left —

WOMAN

I can do it, dear . . .

[He kneels and starts to take off the bandage.]

Please don't.

MAN

[Going on.] Why?

WOMAN

It's an ugly foot, and now it's ghastly.

MAN

It shall soon cease to be ugly . . .

WOMAN

How?

CREATION

MAN

I shall make it beautiful . . .

WOMAN

How?

MAN

By touch of hands . . .

WOMAN

[*Smiling.*] And that will give it beauty?

MAN

That which we serve, we lift . . . it's a simple matter . . . of old they always washed the feet of the traveller, and so the stranger became a friend . . .

WOMAN

Ah, yes, but . . .

MAN

Does a mother ever think her sick dirty child unpleasant?

[*Bares the foot, and washes it.*]

WOMAN

How can you look at it — so ugly — so — ugh!

CREATION

MAN

How?

[*Kisses it.*]

I kiss your foot . . .

WOMAN

You love me so much?

MAN

I am yours: all yours . . . I am your servant, beloved . . .

[*He reaches up and takes her in his arms . . .
Tumult of wind.*]

Listen! the autumn winds: the Bacchantic revels!

WOMAN

Life is dying . . .

MAN

Dying in laughter . . .

WOMAN

But dying . . .

MAN

So shall we die — with a will — like the year —

CREATION

having spent ourselves to the uttermost end . . . Oh,
my beloved . . .

[*Darkness.*]

[*A small room . . . The MAN, now very old, in an
armchair: his eyes shining, his face lifted . . . The
WISE WOMAN, also old, sitting near him . . .*]

WISE WOMAN

Well, friend, how are you?

MAN

[*Smiling.*] Near death, I suppose.

WISE WOMAN

And — are you happy?

MAN

I am strong. And lonely, lonely since she died . . .

WISE WOMAN

You have found the Treasure?

MAN

I have found the Treasure . . .

CREATION

WISE WOMAN

You never doubt it?

MAN

I doubt at times. Clouds come. But they pass . . . It seems to me it took a thousand lifetimes to learn one little truth . . .

WISE WOMAN

And it will take a thousand lifetimes to make that truth prevail . . .

MAN

[Growing a little delirious.]

For what is Man?

He is a bit of the sun that has wandered across the ages:

He is flesh on the way to godhood . . .

He is driven by the longing that filled the night with stars . . .

WISE WOMAN

[Aside.] My friend is dying . . .

MAN

New York paving stones! What's under New York, I ask you? What's under Earth? What's

CREATION

under heaven? Dig deep enough and you will find
fire, fire, fire!

WISE WOMAN

He is looking into himself. He sees the All-Mother . . .

MAN

I go down the winding stairs of my own self. Every
landing is an age. I go down past Crusader, and
Roman and Greek, and savage, and beast: down
to the Earth: down to the Sun: down to
Chaos . . .

Opens up then vastness within me, glimpses, tumult
and madness . . .

The rolling of primal lava . . .

Sealed and dynamic, in this tiny body of mine,

Whipping me on and on . . .

[Rises slowly, eyes shining, delirious.]

Take me then, Power!

Use me, great Mother!

And on you I turn, and consciously use you also,

Shape to your driving,

Divert your currents,

Build to a Vision . . .

[Raising his hand.]

This then my contract . . .

CREATION

To the uncreated I go,
To the unforeseeable . . .
Forth still and forth,
I, the Wanderer,
I, Man, that was sun-fire,
Leaving all moorings,
Cast from all safety,
Footing it beyond the last span of the bridge into the
emptiness,
In a world that is terror and might and ignorant darkness,
In a world where a growing light and a growing god-
liness is Man, and Man alone,
To a Fate I myself shall Will,
And a Destiny I myself shall make,
To a height undreamed of by the Mother,
To children of my own unbelievable . . .

[Staggering, sinking in his chair, trying to rise.]

Courage, my heart!
This is man's life . . .
To pause, or retreat, is sure and certain death,
In the peril of advance is the only safety,
In the ultimate hazard the only security,
So on: in this life I am living: on in my loneliness:
On, striving and toiling: seeing but little ahead:

CREATION

On, then, through death as a victory, through annihilation as a triumph,
Yea, to break through that smoke to the flame of the next life beyond,
Yea, to burst through wall after wall into the unshaped Future,
On, ever greater,
On, ever stronger,
On to fulfilment!

[Sinks back as if dead.]

WISE WOMAN

[Leaning over him, feeling his heart.] He lives.

MAN

[Looking up.] Mother!

WISE WOMAN

What is the Treasure?

MAN

My greater Self.

[Dies.]

WISE WOMAN

He has found the way and the life.

[Darkness.]

CREATION

ALL-MOTHER

[*A chorus singing.*]

Man arises: man, the flame!

He seeks the Treasure in himself!

He seeks to give me greater life!

Higher wisdom, wider truth . . .

He is myself reshaping the Creation:

He is myself working on myself . . .

GLORY TO MAN, THE CREATOR! STRIFE AND TRIUMPH
ON EARTH!

FLAME AND DAWN IN THE HEAVENS!

EPILOGUE

*In the beginning was the sun,
And the sun was Life,
And the sun became Earth.*

*Life is a flame,
And flame is the longing that creates and consumes,
And the longing filled the heavens with many fires.*

*And on Earth through this longing the flame became
 sea and hill,
And the hills became flesh,
And flesh became man.*

*Then is man, life;
Then is man, flame;
Then is man the longing that consumes and creates.*

*Wherefore no waters shall quench us:
Neither sleep, the rain-waters; nor death, the sea-
 waters . . .
For who may extinguish the sun?*

CREATION

Wherefore longing drives us:

*Wherefore the sun in us would shed planets, even as
the sun in heaven:*

So we seek each other, to beget children,

So we turn to ourselves, to beget works.

We are the fire that becomes mind:

We are the fire that becomes spirit . . .

A hand works on the world and shapes it anew,

A brain gazes on the world, and sees that it is good.

No peace shall give us rest,

And no quiet calm us:

A flame is restless . . .

*We shall find peace then in the blazing forth of our
fires,*

And in battle, healing . . .

This is man's destiny,

And this his cycle . . .

*Never to dull the flame of his longing in sloth and
sweet trances,*

*But to be whipped before the driving fire into new
heights of himself.*

For we are the light of Earth,

And we shall be the light of the heavens . . .

CREATION

*We shall put a girdle around the skies,
We shall harness Orion, and make for our souls new
Pleiades:
We are flesh on the way to godhood.*

END

